Life Renovations

by windseeker2305

Summary

At times people are forced to evolve in order to survive. Sometimes people must be free in order to thrive. After a summer of torture with the Dursleys, Harry falls into a self induced magical coma. Draco—who holds a hidden torch for him—jumps in to help. There they meet and decide many things that could very well change the Wizarding World forever.

Life Renovations is 1 of 3 books in this story.

Notes

This story contains so many things I can't list it all, but I shall put down the basics. This is a Draco/Harry slash creature fic. Contains (down the line) mpreg, torture, action, adventure, darkish fic, sub!Harry/dom!Draco relationship. Romance and family is a major recurring theme throughout the three Life Cycle stories.
The weather was horrible, which should have indicated what kind of day they would be having. They should have felt something was going to happen. But when the summons arrived, they didn't think anything unusual was going to happen. They had no idea how wrong they were. They had no idea how drastically their lives were about to change.

Draco Malfoy was within his godfather's study; ignoring his tea and standing before the large window with the heel of his palm pressing circles over his chest; over his heart. Trying to dispel the tightness there. The never ending ache. It had been getting worse over the last few months and tonight the ache was especially noticeable. He'd been in hiding since the beginning of the summer, Severus having taken it upon himself to hide Draco away from his father and his father's associates. That hurt. It was probably one of the reasons why he felt this pain. There was something else though. He knew deep down this ache was caused by something else, perhaps someone else. Draco sighed and dropped his forehead against the cool glass of the window. As soon as his eyes closed, a flash of pained and frightened green eyes flashed into his minds eyes, causing Draco to gasp and clutch at his chest with that hand. "Potter?" he whispered.

Draco opened his eyes, staring unseeing outside. Potter had been on his mind a lot recently as well. Truthfully- he could be truthful to himself- Potter had always been on his mind.

Before he could think further on the enigma that was the gorgeous Golden Boy, Severus entered the study with his robes billowing out around him. "Come Draco. Dumbledore has called me to his office and I do not want to leave you here alone."

Draco nodded and followed his godfather to the fireplace and soon they had flooed into Severus' personal quarters within Hogwarts. Draco was told to remain there while Severus went to see what the old coot wanted. The blond Slytherin smirked at the aggravation appearing on his godfather's face but he wisely kept his mouth shut as he lowered himself onto the sofa and stared off into the fire.

While he was alone, he thought about the rest of his summer vacation, wondering if it would be as safe as it had been since being moved to his godfather's estate. Draco wondered not for the first time where Severus planned to keep him for the rest of the summer, as it would be impossible to remain at Severus' estate. No doubt the Death Eaters would soon make an appearance to see if Draco had run to his godfather.

Draco didn't have the proper amount of time to ponder this because after a few more moments alone, the door slammed open, to reveal a very disgruntled Severus storm in.

Draco stood, eyeing Severus' face. "Obviously the old man has said something that you don't like," he drawled.

Severus stalked by his godson without a word and went into his private potions closet. Draco heard the clinking of potion vials and went to see what was going on. He caught his godfather shrinking and storing many potions into the hidden pockets of his robes.
"Are you going to tell me what's going on?" Draco finally asked as they left Severus' rooms and began to travel through the castle heading for the Entrance Hall.

"Dumbledore is sending me on a ridiculous mission to check on his pet. According to Fawkes, something his happening at the home of Harry Potter."

Draco's eyes widened, but then he quickly sneered to cover up his true feelings on what he'd just heard. "What? Is the Golden Boy not getting everything he wants? Not enough servants doing his bidding?" the usual taunts sounded wrong on his tongue. There was no real venom in it. Severus must have thought so too because he looked at his godson with a raised brow.

"I could care less, Draco. But I've been ordered to check up on him, and you'll be going with me."

"Why are you taking all those potions if you think it's nothing?" Draco asked as they ascended from the dungeons.

"Always go prepared. You should think about doing the same."

"Why would I want to do that when I've got you?"

His godfather just sneered at him as they headed out of the entrance hall and proceeded to the Hogwarts gates, where from there they could Apparate.

"I know you can Apparate now, but you will have to side-along for this one." Draco nodded just in time before his godfather grabbed the back of his neck, and they were gone with a POP!

Severus and Draco reappeared in a darkened alley a couple of blocks from Potter's house.

"Have you ever been to Potter's house before?" Draco asked quietly.

"No, I was only now given the coordinates. Why Dumbledore couldn't send one of the Order is beyond me. He knows I have you to deal with. Though he even told me not to expect anything, but just wanted to be sure."

Draco didn't say anything to that as he followed his godfather through the shadows towards the Dursley home. Draco had always been under the impression that when Harry Potter went home for the holidays that he would be returning to some mansion where he would be waited on hand and foot, getting anything he asked for, and being pampered as the savior of the Wizarding World. Severus was under the same impression, which is most of the reason he believed the young Potter to be as conceited as James Potter.

Draco was pulled out of his thoughts when Severus suddenly stopped. Draco looked up to spy a simple two story house with lights glaring brightly out of the windows at them.

"Is this it?" Draco asked incredulously. "This doesn't look like a mansion, Uncle Sev."

"According to Dumbledore's directions, this is Potter's home. Number 4 Privet Drive. I must admit that this is not what I was expecting."

Before Draco could reply to that he and Severus heard muffled yells that seemed to come from upstairs; from a room. A room that had bars in front of the window. His hand went back up to his chest again. That painful ache was back and tenfold. Draco's breath caught in his throat.

"What are bars doing on the window?" he wondered aloud, hiding the internal apprehension. "Are they keeping somebody captive?"
"Don't be ridiculous, Draco. Come, let's get this over with."

So Draco and Severus made their way to the front door, the shouting getting louder. Severus started to get a horrid feeling when he realized Harry Potter wasn't the one doing the shouting. They stood at the door a moment, listening.

"….you FREAK! You should be….don't throw your worthless self out!….this is the least I should be able to do….Boy! Do you hear me?" Just then it sounded like something had taken a long tumbling fall.

"You're like him, aren't you?" a fearful voice asked suddenly beside them. Draco jumped to the other side of his godfather, but Severus merely raised an eyebrow as he peered at the boy hiding in the bushes beside the door stoop.

"Are we like whom?"

"Harry. You should get him out. My father has gone too far. I...I think he's finally snapped!"

"What?" Severus blinked; not once but three times at Dudley Dursley. The boy seemed to gather his courage and stepped out of the bush.

"Dad is killing Harry! That's why you're here, isn't it? To save the freak?" Draco stood staring wide eyed at Harry's cousin by the end, but Severus had already flung open the door after the end of Dudley's first sentence and barged into the house. The sight that met their eyes was one they would not forget for a very long time.

It was obvious Harry Potter had just fallen down the stairs that faced the front door. Whether he had fallen or been pushed, Draco nor Severus could be sure, but the boy was laying on his back with his legs and lower back still on the stairs and his upper torso laying twisted on the floor. Potter was lying there, covered in blood and cuts, staring with glazed eyes up at his purple-faced uncle, who was screaming at the boy at the top of his lungs.

"...Stupid boy! You're worthless, a waste of space and air! You... Don't.... Deserve...To.... Live!" Vernon Dursley punctuated every word with a kick to Harry's side. Petunia Dursley ran to her husband and grabbed his arm, trying to pull him away from her nephew.

"Vernon, stop! Please! YOU'RE KILLING HIM! Stop!" But her husband shoved her away.

"He's a freak, Petunia! The only thing he will ever deserve is pain and death. Isn't that what you bring to others, boy? Anything bad that can happen will happen when you're near! I'm going to do the world a favor and relieve it of the filth that is this FREAK!" Vernon raised his fat foot over Harry's head, and by this time Draco could see that Potter had lost consciousness. And Draco thought that was a good thing, because he couldn't believe what Harry's uncle was saying to his nephew, and he was glad that Harry couldn't hear it, though he suspected Harry had heard it all before. He was also glad relieve Potter was unconscious so that he wasn't feeling much of the pain, which Draco was sure he would be feeling.

Draco had a split second before he moved. In that moment, he watched as Harry's uncle raised his foot. In that moment, an insane feeling of panic and coldness captured him and that ache in his chest swelled to encompass his entire body. Somehow he knew that if Potter were to die, then he himself would be forever changed; he would be forever lacking...something. And in that moment, all of the bad history, all the jealousy and any animosity they held between each other seemed to just vanish for Draco, and he felt a sickening rage as he stared at the state of his fellow classmate.
"STUPIFY!" he shouted, wand pointed at the fat Dursley and sending the man tumbling into the opposite wall, creating fissures along the plaster.

"Draco!" Severus yelled, astonished that his godson would use a spell against a muggle, in front of him, even if said muggle deserved it and more. But Draco ignored him and quickly made his way over to Potter and knelt beside the unconscious boy.

"Potter? Hey, you better not be dead, Potter! If someone is going to kill you it's going to be me."

Severus came to kneel beside him and brandished his wand over Harry. "His spine is intact, and his neck is not broken, thank Merlin. But his right leg is broken and his arm is sprained. He has a few broken ribs, a punctured lung, and internal bleeding." The grown wizard observed; his anger and rage oozing out of every pore.

Draco looked down at Harry, horrified of his condition. He felt helpless. His hands hovered over the broken boy, wishing to do something but not knowing what to do. It was odd. He couldn't think straight at the moment, seeing Potter lying like this. All he knew was that they had to save Potter. So much more depended on Harry living than just the Wizarding World.

"Sev? Sev, what do I do?"

"Here, Draco. If you could please administer these to him." Severus pulled out several vials of potions and thrust them into the shaking hands of his godson. "I assume you know how to give potions to an unconscious person?"

"Yes, sir." Draco said, taking the potions into his hands.

"Wait! You might hurt him further." Petunia suddenly said from the corner where she and her whale child were huddled together. Severus turned around and pierced her with one of his worst glares.

"And what would you know about it, muggle?"

"Because I suspect Vernon poisoned the boy."

"What?" the acid clearly dripped from the Potion Master's voice.

"Ha…Harry, he was acting strange after dinner." Dudley piped in. "He was acting like he was drunk, or on drugs, and even though I tell other people that he does stuff like that, I know he doesn't do that kind of thing."

"What did the muggle give to Potter?" Severus asked, but the woman and her son shook their heads. They didn't know.

Severus growled and advanced upon the unconscious Vernon Dursley. As he crossed the hallway, he noticed the door to the closet under the stairs was opened and he looked in just as he was passing. He suddenly stopped, his eyes widening. There was a small cot fixed there, as well as Harry's trunk, and his owl cage. It took him no more than a few seconds to guess that this is where the boy was kept during the summer holidays. There was dried blood on the ground and upon that small bed and Severus felt his blood boil.

He advanced towards Dursley and raised his wand to the muggle's face. "Rennervate," he muttered darkly, and watched the fat man's eyes open. Severus arm shot out like a snake attacking and curled his hand around Dursley's throat, his thumb pressing hard against the Adam's apple. "What did you give the boy?" His nose was nearly touching Vernon's, and his wand was embedded deeply into the
other man's chest.

Draco moved his eyes away from his godfather, knowing that Severus would get the information he required. He moved around till he was kneeling at Harry's head and then slowly raised the unconscious teen's head till it was resting in his lap. "Potter?" He moved his fingers through the thick silky ebony hair. If he were truly honest with himself, he would have admitted that he'd always wanted to run his fingers through Harry's thick disorderly locks.

Harry's head started to move back and forth, and he groaned and started to shake. Draco stilled his hands. "Potter? Can you open your eyes?"

"No, I'm sorry…I know I deserve it, but please…. stop hitting me." Harry was clearly trapped in his mind, in his pain.

Draco growled deep in his throat, and glared at Harry's relatives. "No one deserves to be treated this way! Especially not Harry Potter! Do you know who this boy is?" he yelled, still cradling Harry's head in his lap. "He is the Savior of the Wizarding World! He is the only one who can save us!"

"That has nothing to do with us, boy!" Vernon yelled back at Draco. "What do we care if your world crumbles? We would be blessed if all of you FREAKS were to disappear!"

Draco was just about to say something else, when he was cut off by the most unlikely voice. "No, Vernon." Petunia Dursley said, pulling herself away from the corner to stand somewhat meekly beside Severus to glare at her husband. "If Harry doesn't win this war with their Dark Lord, our world will crumble too! We would be living in total hell!"

Vernon's face, if possible, turned an even darker purple in his rage, and he growled, "what did you say, Petunia?"

Petunia said nothing at first and only continued to stare at her toes. But then she squared her shoulders and raised her head, her eyes filled with determination and grim acceptance. "I said no. Removing Harry and his kind will never make anything better. And…And I wish I could have been stronger for Harry, instead of listening to you, but I hated Lily, I was so jealous, and I let that be my excuse for verbally abusing Harry and allowing you to beat him. But tonight you've gone too far! I don't want your twisted hatred for anything different to taint our son anymore! And I don't want the boy hurt anymore! He's never deserved it!"

Vernon stared at his wife incredulously for a few moments, and then he swung his arm around and backhanded her. She was so shocked that she lost her balance and fell.

"Mum!" Dudley ran to Petunia and cowered there beside her, looking at his father as if he'd never seen the man before.

"You're my wife! How dare you decide to side with that boy! They're all freaks; and that boy is the biggest freak of them all!"

"ENOUGH!" Snape yelled into Vernon's face. He raised his wand at the man's forehead and barked, "Legilimens." Severus searched through the horrid muggle's memories to identify what he had given to Harry. After a minute, he found it, pulled out of Vernon's mind, making sure to make the process as painful as possible and then turned and instructed Petunia to retrieve the poison.

Draco had gone back to staring at Harry's face. Potter was still groaning in pain, eyes clenched tightly shut against it. Draco couldn't help himself and he immediately placed a cool hand across Harry's forehead and the other over Harry's heart. Immediately he was seized with great pain,
exploding in his right leg and arm. His chest tightened in agonizing pain as he tried to draw in a
breath. Beneath his hands, Harry's breathing became a little less erratic and his eyes fluttered open.
Draco snatched his hands away and both he and Potter gasped at the reaction. The pain left his own
body and Potter clenched his jaw tightly as the pain returned to him.

Draco sat in shock for a moment, trying to regain his breath before his mind could comprehend what
had just happened. And then he realized what had occurred. He didn't understand why or how, but
he realized that when he touched Harry he had taken some of the pain away and into himself. Once
he realized this, before he could think to ask himself why he was doing it, Draco returned his hands
to where they had been and clenched his jaw shut against the onslaught of the pain.

"Malfoy?"

Draco's eyes popped open and he stared down into the pain filled emerald gaze.

"What are you doing? What... How did you get here?"

Draco smirked despite the situation. "Calm down, Potter. We've come to help you."

Harry looked away and shut his eyes. "You should get away from me. Anyone who tries to help me
usually ends up very hurt or dead. Uncle Vernon is right. I don't deserve any help. I... I don't
deserve to be alive." That's why my friends hate me now, Harry thought. That's why they've all
turned their backs on me.

"You're an even bigger idiot than I thought you were if you actually believe anything that muggle
says to you!" He glared at Harry when the boy opened his eyes wide in shock. "Shut up! You're
going to annoy me!" he said when he saw that Harry was about to say something.

He could see Harry was surprised by the lack of venom that had always accompanied his words
when the two were together. But then Harry's eyes softened and he actually smiled. But it didn't last
long, however, because then Harry started to shudder, then cough, and blood started dribbling down
his chin.

"Severus!" Draco cried out in shock.

Professor Snape rushed to his side in an instant. He cursed when he saw the state Harry was in. "We
need to get him to Poppy immediately. Here, woman! Come here, and bring your...son," Severus
called to the weeping woman on the floor. He stared at the slumped body of Vernon; he had of
course stupefied the man. He was glad that he had thought to bring two portkeys instead of just the
one to Hogwarts, as the muggles wouldn't have been able to enter the school.

Draco saw his godfather cast the Patronus spell and watched the beautiful white glowing doe canter
away through a window. He assumed his godfather had just sent a message, requesting help for
Harry, and then he pulled out a large button and held it out. "Draco, help Mr. Potter touch the
Portkey. Petunia, you and your son place a finger on the button."

Instantly, they all felt a sharp tug behind their naval, and were being pulled into a void, twisting and
turning in a cold black nothingness. Draco held onto Potter as tightly as he could without causing
further injury and was glad when they landed he was beneath the Gryffindor to cushion the fall. And
even though Draco was cushioning the fall, it jarred Harry so much that he couldn't help but cry out
in pain and Draco instantly placed his hands back over the boy's heart and forehead to relieve him of
some of the pain. He didn't even let go when the pain made Draco feel so sick that he thought he
might retch. He just held on, and was glad he could help with Harry's pain.
"Severus, where are we?" he asked, looking around. They'd arrived outside on a dark street in front of a row of tall houses pressed together.

"Welcome to Number 12, Mr. Malfoy, Mrs. Dursley, and Mr. Dursley." Draco looked over and narrowed his eyes when he saw Dumbledore quickly walking their way, with a bustling mediwitch behind him. When Dumbledore stopped in front of them, he gave out for slips of parchment to Draco and the Dursleys. "Please read what is on the parchment."

"Number Twelve, Grimmauld Place," Draco read as the other two did, and suddenly another house sprang up in between two others. Draco ignored the gasp from the two muggles and stared blinking at it. "Grimmauld Place? This is a Black residence!"

"Quickly, Madam Pomfrey! Potter doesn't have much time," Severus intoned urgently. And the small group hurried to get across the road and into the house.

"But…But, I…" Harry tried to talk, but couldn't stop coughing and Draco cringed when more blood came pouring out of his mouth. "I don't feel that much pain. It's not that bad," Harry insisted.

Draco didn't help himself and he snorted. But then his amusement died when he caught Dumbledore staring at him with that damn twinkle in his deep blue eyes. Draco narrowed his eyes at the Headmaster, wondering what in the bloody hell was so amusing with the situation that would have the Headmaster twinkling merrily. Not to mention the man's expression made the hairs on his arms raise on end. He didn't trust Dumbledore, not one bit.

Draco didn't ponder long, because now they were levitating Harry to a conjured stretcher, and he was afraid to let go of the other boy. But he really had no choice as the stretcher was being towed upstairs. He was relieved to see that when he released him, Harry didn't seem to gain back the pain Draco had taken.

"Draco, stay with the Dursleys. We'll be down after we've seen to Potter," Severus told him.

Draco nodded and watched as they disappeared up the stairs, and he heard Madam Pomfrey's worried voice carry down to him. "What has happened to this poor child?" he didn't hear the answer, but it didn't matter because he already knew the answer.

Draco turned on his heels and stared at Potter's relatives, his face emotionless, but his eyes blazing coldly at them. "Follow me." He turned and led them to the first room he found, a parlor he had seen that was off of the entrance hall. There they sat in complete silence, staring at each other, until Dudley worked up the courage to break it.

"Um…Er…" he began. Draco raised one elegantly sculpted eyebrow. "Are you a friend of Harry's?"

Draco smiled a smile that wasn't warm at all. "No. We've never been friends. In fact we've hated each other. People consider us enemies." This seemed to surprise the two muggles.

"It certainly didn't look as if you were enemies. You were taking care of him," Petunia pointed out.

"Regardless of what you think, we do take care of our own." And then he smiled; he allowed his facial features to soften as he slowly pulled out his wand, caressing it gently between his fingers. "So," he began and looked at Dudley. The fat blob visibly gulped and Petunia put her skinny arm around as much of her son as she could as she stared fearfully at the wand, then at Draco's face. "Did you ever hit Potter? I advise you to tell the truth because I'll know if you lie."

"Erm…yeah, but it was all in good fun," Dudley whispered.
The smile disappeared from Draco's face. "I see." His deadly calm reply could have frozen the Great Lake at Hogwarts within a second.

"Please don't punish my son. He didn't know any better. I should have intervened when he started to take after his father, but as I said before, I wasn't strong enough to see the wrong, until now."

"Does Potter get beaten and verbally abused by you lot often?"

"Yes." Petunia answered, staring right back at him. Her eyes spoke of her shame, but Draco felt nothing but rage towards the two muggles.

"For how long?" he asked slowly.

Petunia closed her eyes and took a deep breath and her eyes started to water, but Draco ignored that and waited for her answer. "Ever since he was dropped on our doorstep. When he was one."

"And that cupboard under the stairs?"

"That is his bedroom. Vernon moved him back to the cupboard when he returned this year," she whispered. Draco slowly stood up and pointed his wand at the two shaking Dursleys.

"I should kill you both for what you've done to him."

"But you don't even like him!" Dudley cried, springing to his feet to stand in front of his mother. Draco stared at him for a moment, trying to regain the control on his emotions. He was sure that if he spoke a spell, it would probably be the killing curse. He didn't understand where the huge amount of pain and rage was coming from. Sure he could understand being upset about all of this, but what he was feeling now was way beyond that. But what he did know what that he wanted to hurt Harry's relatives for abusing him. He just knew that he had to do something, so instead of using his wand, Draco took the more hands on approach and slugged Dursley in his fat face as hard as he could, smiling when he heard the cartilage break in the boys nose and watched him fall back onto his mother. Then he smirked and stalked out of the room. He'd be damned if he was going to stay in their presence for even a second more.
As Draco moved out into the entrance hall he heard a few pops that signaled the arrival of several people via Apparition and the rush of noise that indicated the Floo had been used. He stopped outside of the door where he heard voices coming from and hesitated before slowly pushing it open. The moment he saw who was in the room, which was the kitchen, Draco wished he hadn't gone in. The kitchen was swarming with Weasleys and one bushy haired, know-it-all muggleborn.

Draco scowled at all the red and frizz in the room and turned around to leave immediately, but before he could even take a step, a shout filled the air.

"Stupefy!"

Thankful for his Quidditch Seeker skills, Draco managed to dodge the curse with his quick reflexes and ducked next to the table.

"Ronald Weasley! Just what do you think you're doing?"

"It's Malfoy, Mum! You know with his kind, you curse first and ask questions later. He's here to spy on us."

"Honestly, Ronald! Do you really think someone could get in here if they weren't invited by Dumbledore?" Hermione said.

"That's right, dear," Molly Weasley said, nodding to Hermione, and then she turned to her sons and daughter. "You children behave, do you hear me? No cursing! Your father and I have a meeting with Albus. Come along, Arthur." Mr. Weasley nodded and led his wife out of the kitchen.

Ron, Fred, George, and Ginny were all looking at Draco but their expressions were all different. Ron glared at the blond with dark suspicion and hatred, while the twins were watching him with open curiosity and somewhat bemused expressions. And Ginny, well she was just looking at scene with open amusement. Draco watched them all for a moment, a cold mask firmly in place, sneer gracing his lips.

"What in the hell are you doing here, Malfoy?" Ron snarled. He was gripping his wand so tight that his knuckles had started to turn white.

"I don't see how that concerns you, Weasel." And then he smirked at the rest of them when Ron's face turned even redder. "But I bet I can guess why you all are here. You're always on the Golden Boy's beck and call," Draco started, knowing full well that Harry hadn't had a chance to contact his friends. "You've come to make sure he isn't going to die; though I'm pretty sure there's a good chance he may never wake up." Even as he said the words, he felt his world tilt and a sharp pain stab his chest.

"What are you on about?" Ron demanded.

"Harry?" one of the twins asked, and Ginny's eyes finally focused clearly onto the spoken subject.
"What about Harry? What happened to him?" she asked, and Draco frowned at the feeling behind her words for Harry, but before he could make a scathing remark, Ron once again spoke, and for the first time ever, completely surprised the blond Slytherin.

"Who cares what happened to him! Something is always happening to him! He probably deserved whatever he got! We all know how he thrives on the attention."

"Ron! You know that's not true. Harry hates being the center of attention!" Ginny snarled.

"From what I've seen over the years you are the one who craves the attention," Draco pointed out. Ron glared at Draco.

"Whatever, we're better off without him around!"

"Whoa, little bro! How can you talk like that about your best mate?"

Ron turned to his brothers. "He's not my best mate, not anymore. Come on, Mione. I can't stand to be in the same place as Potter and Malfoy!"

Ron grabbed his girlfriend's hand and started to drag her towards the fireplace. Draco watched all this, desperately trying to keep his chin from falling to the floor. Did he understand correctly? The Golden Trio was no more? He watched dumbfounded and with a certain mounting anger as Granger tried to pull out of the redhead's grasp but was unsuccessful and was manhandled into the fireplace to be whisked away by glowing green fire, closely followed by her dick head of a boyfriend.

"What the bloody fuck was that about? Are my eyes and ears deceiving me or did Weasel just renounce Potter?" he asked incredulously as his fury continued to build.

For some odd reason, he was angry for Potter, instead of just angry at Potter, like always. Weren't Potter's friends supposed to be loyal, standing by him through everything? Isn't that what the Gryffindors always spouted on about. And where were they when Potter was getting beaten all the time by his fat uncle? And why weren't they with Harry now when he needed them the most?

"Draco, please tell us what's wrong with Harry." Draco was surprised out of his fuming thoughts when the Weaslette softly addressed him by name. The twins were looking at him imploringly as well.

"Answer my question first," he demanded and crossed his arms over his chest. Ginny sighed and rolled her eyes, but did move to take a seat at the kitchen table closer to where Draco was standing. The others did the same with Draco being the last to sit.

"It's not really our place to tell you what happened. It's really Harry who should do that."

"Yeah, or the bastard that is our brother, Ronniekins," George said.

"But he would never say a word 'cause the git knows he's in the wrong!" Fred put in.

"Yes, that makes it all very clear now, thanks," Draco sneered, his impatience clear in his silver eyes.

"Hold on there, blondie. Don't get your ponytails in a twist," one of the twins, Fred or George said and they were grinning maniacally. Draco frowned and looked over at the youngest Weasley when she started to snigger.

"What are you three on about? Just hurry up and tell me!"
After a few moments of more laughter, the three red heads turned serious again after they heard the hurried footsteps over head and the slight cry of their mom.

"As you know the Wizarding World is full of different people with different magic. And you also know that most wizards and witches have very open minds when it comes to people connecting to, being attracted to, or falling in love with someone from the same sex. Only about ten percent of our population has anything bad to say about same sex relationships," Ginny explained, though she was pretty sure the pretty boy before her knew this, and was almost doubly sure that Draco did in fact look to his own side of the field when it came to lovers.

"It seems our dear little brother is part of that little percent," one of the twins said.

"Your brother is a homophobe," Draco said nodding, "I saw that one coming a mile away. But what does this have to do with Harry?"

The three Weasleys blinked at him in surprise at how casual the blond had said Harry's name. And then the entire situation seemed to have dawned on them. Here they all were at Number 12, sitting down in the kitchen and having a very civil conversation with Draco Malfoy of all people, and the git wasn't being a git at all. He seemed to truly want to know what was up in Harry's life, and it didn't look like he wanted the information to hold over anybody. None of the Weasley kids had ever seen Malfoy's face so open before and a thought dawned in the twins' heads at the same time. They turned, nodded, and then smiled at each other before facing Draco again.

"What now?" Draco demanded to the two identical grinning fools.

"Oh nothing, nothing. We just…"

"Realized something is all…"

"No need to worry. We're just going to see…"

"How things turn out!"

"Yes, okay, whatever." Draco turned to what seemed like the sanest Weasley, and looked at her expectantly.

"Well Ron found out Harry is gay and he sort of flipped."

"Gin! You weren't supposed to tell him that part."

Ginny shot her brothers such a withering look that Draco found himself looking at the little Weaslette with just a little bit of respect.

"I know you two are thinking the same I am. This will just make things easier, don't you think."

Since Draco didn't much care to listen to the Weasleys inane bickering, he tuned in to his own thoughts about the news he's just discovered. Weasley, Granger, and Harry were no longer talking because Ron didn't like homosexuals. But there had to more to it than that. It couldn't have been just that to make him turn his back on his best friend. But then again, this was Ronald Weasley, and everyone knew how stupid he was. Aside from all that, he'd just found out that Harry was gay! Harry liked males! This… this was excellent news!

"Malfoy, you smiling like that is creepy," Fred said.

Draco wiped the smile off his face. "So your brother turned his back on Harry just because he's
turned out to be gay? There has to be more to it than that."

"Well also… Ron has been jealous of Harry for years and I think he's using Harry's sexuality as an excuse. Our brother has become an arsehole. We three are still Harry's friends. We would never turn our back on him. Even if he were to switch to Voldemort's side, we'd still be here for him." Draco's eyebrow hit his hairline at that, even as he watched the twins nod in agreement with their sister.

"Now, Draco please. Will you tell us what's going on with Harry? Were you telling the truth about how serious his condition is? What happened anyway?"

Draco nodded. "He was…" he stopped here because he didn't know how much Harry wanted the people around him to know how he was beaten at his home. It was another surprise to realize Potter never complained about the abuse. Otherwise rumors about The-Boy-Who-Has-Turned-Into-Obsessive-Thoughts-In-Draco's-Head would have moved like wild fire throughout the school.

But then he realized he could at least be honest with these people, as they seemed to have been to him. He thought the whole situation was ludicrous. Here he was sitting and talking almost pleasantly to three Weasleys. And what was worse was that he didn't mind talking to these three. They were the most open minded Weasleys he'd ever met. So he told them about how he and Severus had to go check on Potter and about how they found Potter with his family. He kept details out, just explained how they'd found him and how they'd Portkeyed out of there.

"He never said how bad it was there," Ginny whispered. "He did say he wasn't liked by his relatives, but that was all he ever said."

"Idiot Gryffindor," Draco muttered.

"Hey!" the surrounding Gryffindors exclaimed.

"Well he is! He should have said something! Anything! He should have told someone! I could have-" he cut off, choking on his words and glared hard at the table while trying to push down that irrational rage again.

"Yes, but Harry isn't like that," Ginny said quietly, watching Draco with a soft expression. "He keeps all his pain inside. That's why we worry about him so much. He's always putting others before him. I think…I think it's because he feels guilty about things. Things that he never had any control over, you know. Still, you're right. He should have said something." Her voice had lowered into a whisper at the end, and her eyes shone with unshed tears.

"Malfoy, you sound like you care about what happens to Harry," Fred said, his grin back into place. Draco opened his mouth to deny, but something was caught in his throat, making it impossible to deny it. He suddenly popped up from his chair and backed away from the table. Afraid of what he truly wanted to say. He'd kept that secret since fourth year and he wasn't sure if he was ready to give it up. Not now. Not until he could wrap his mind around everything that had happened recently.

"Er…Right…I've got to go!" Then he retreated as gracefully as he could.

Ginny, Fred, and George continued to sit and look at each other. "That was weird," Ginny said. Her brothers nodded in agreement. "I mean… that was Draco Malfoy, right?"

"Well I certainly hope so lil sis, especially after what you did with his hair!" Fred said.

"It seems little Malfoy Jr. isn't the cold meanie we all thought he was. And did you get the impression that he did in fact care about what was happening with Harry?" George said, Ginny and Fred nodding their agreement.
"It was even stranger that Malfoy seemed to get angry on Harry's behalf for Ron's betrayal."

"Perhaps, Harry isn't the only one here with a heart full of unrequited love," Ginny said dreamily.

"They'd make one hot couple, yeah?" George breathed and his brother nodded. They were definitely not bothered with the idea of same sex coupling, especially since they themselves were both bisexual.

"Maybe a helping plan would be in order here. If we're sure we can trust Malfoy," Ginny said thoughtfully, and her brothers grinned. The three red heads bent so their heads were touching and began, and they discussed until their parents returned to give them news of their adopted brother.

Draco quickly made his way upstairs, following the noise to the third floor landing. He quickly found himself outside of what he thought was Potter's room. He stood in the shadows watching four people discuss something in hushed whispers. He recognized Mr. Weasley and Mrs. Weasley, and Dumbledore. Severus must still be inside the room with Madam Pomfrey. And standing beside the Headmaster was…. Draco's eyes widened. Was that? Was that Sirius Black he was looking at? As if hearing his thoughts, Black's head snapped up and searched Draco out in the shadows.

"Dumbledore, what is Malfoy Jr. doing in my house?" he growled, taking a threatening step forward. "Is the little Death Eater here to finish off Harry? And what in the hell have you done with your hair, little Malfoy?"

Draco would have asked what the man was talking about, but before he could find out what Black was talking about, another voice interrupted.

"I'm still amazed at how little of your brain you actually use, mutt," Severus' silky voice came from the doorway. Draco moved a little to see if he could get a glance inside but his godfather quickly shut the door and glared at Black.

"Should have known you would be behind it, Snivelus."

"We're not here to fight amongst ourselves. We're here to talk about Harry Potter," Dumbledore said.

Draco glared and stood straighter as he carefully moved closer to the adults. "If that's the case, would you care to explain to us, Headmaster, why you continued to place Potter in a home that was clearly unhealthy?"

"What does he mean, Albus?" asked Molly, frowning a little at Draco.

"What I mean, madam, is that Harry has been beaten regularly for years by his Uncle. Mrs. Dursley and her son are down stairs. I'm sure they wouldn't mind being questioned. They confessed to me easily enough. Not to mention the fact that I saw it with my own eyes. His uncle trying to beat him to death."

Draco smirked and stood back, watching as Black and Mrs. Weasley's anger punched through the roof and they were verbally attacking Dumbledore. Draco saw this as his chance and he slipped into Potter's room almost unnoticed. Severus saw him but did not stop him. He was surprised when he was allowed to go in, but didn't think too much on that, because now he was approaching the bed. Harry lay there, paler than death and looking more defeated and helpless than Draco had ever seen him.

Harry had been cleaned; his wounds washed and smothered in healing balms. He lay on his back, the white sheet pulled up to his naked torso, and upon looking closer, he was disgusted to see how thin Potter was. On top of it all, the Dursleys had been starving him too. It's muggles like the
Dursleys that deserve to be destroyed.

"Mr. Malfoy, I'm glad you are here. I would like to talk to you about something," Madam Pomfrey said as she pulled the comforter up to Harry's chin. Then she straightened and faced the blond. He noticed her lips twitch as she looked at him and he could clearly see that she was trying to keep from laughing.

"What? Do I have something on my face?"

The question seemed to bring the woman to her senses because she shook her head then gestured for him to take one of the two chairs positioned beside the bed. Once they were seated, Draco tried to keep his eyes off of the Gryffindor lying beside him, but he was failing miserably. He wanted to see those jade eyes open and on him.

"What did you want to speak to me about, Madam Pomfrey?"

"Severus said you were there with him when you found Mr. Potter, is that correct?" Draco nodded. "He also said he saw you do something to Mr. Potter, and that it seemed to help with his pain. Is that also correct?"

Draco suddenly found himself embarrassed, but nodded anyway. Poppy gave the young man before her a small smile and continued with her questions. "Have you ever done this thing with anyone else?"

"No. It was the first time, and I didn't even know what I was doing at the time. All I could think about was his pain, and I wanted…." Draco stopped and frowned. He looked down at his hands in his lap and pressed his lips together.

"You wanted to what?"

I wanted to take his pain away. I couldn't stand to see him like that anymore. But instead of answering he only just shook his head.

"All right. What happened when you touched Harry?"

"I felt his pain. I don't know how he wasn't screaming with it. It was worse than being put under the Cru…the pain was horrible. When I touched him the first time, I could feel that the pain in him receded. But I had to let go fast after that. I wasn't prepared for anything to happen. Then I did it again after I prepared for the pain."

"Do you mean to tell me that when you touched Mr. Potter, not only did you help with the pain, but that you took his pain into yourself?"

"Yes and no. I did help with the pain but I didn't take it all away. I took the pain into myself and held it, as much as I could—honestly I don't really know what was happening. It made him feel better though…. Is he going to be alright?" Draco asked suddenly, not being able to stop himself from asking. It didn't make him feel any better when Pomfrey frowned and turned sad eyes on her charge.

"I'm afraid Mr. Potter is in a magical coma and I can't be sure if he'll pull through this. He's been through so much, more than we ever knew. It will be his choice whether he comes back to us or not."

"What do you mean you don't know if he'll pull through this? He was awake and talking when you brought him up here!"
"Yes, but he had a seizure and fell unconscious." Pomfrey sat with Draco for a moment, the both of them with their eyes on Harry. Then Pomfrey seemed to pull herself together and she stood and pointed her wand at Draco.

"Up please." As soon as he stood, Pomfrey transfigured his chair into another bed and then ordered Draco to undress and climb into the bed. She waited until he was undressed before heading to the door. "Do something about your hair, Mr. Malfoy. I'll assume you didn't do it and that the Weasley twins got a hold of you. I'll be back in a moment and you had better be in that bed when I return."

And with that she was gone. Draco would have demanded to know why he was being sent to bed, but his mind was more occupied with what was wrong with his hair. He ran over to the mirror on the wall and his mouth dropped open in a silent scream.

Three floors down in the kitchen, the Weasleys were just about ready to leave when they heard a shriek come from up stairs. "WEASELS!"

Molly Weasley turned to her grinning twins, and their smiles immediately disappeared.

"What? We…"

"Didn't do…"

"Anything!"

"I was wondering why that boy was walking around with his hair all up in girly little pony tails. I told you three to get along."

"But Mum, we were getting along!" Ginny said, trying to keep a straight face because she had been the one to hex Draco in the first place.

"Weasels! I can't fix it! Fix my hair now!"

Draco came running back into the kitchen in nothing but his boxers, and Ginny couldn't help herself, she nearly swallowed her tongue. A pale Adonis was now standing before her and she couldn't stop her face from turning red. Not even the stupid pigtails she'd put his hair into could detract from the whole ensemble. It was no wonder Harry was so obsessed over Draco.

"Wow, Malfoy! Now we understand where all those rumors were coming from," Fred said and nudged his brother, who nodded before quirking his eyebrows at Draco in a suggestive manner.

"Draco Malfoy! You get upstairs right now and get some clothes on!" Molly shrieked like the true mother she was, and despite being a Malfoy, Draco cringed under the Weasley matriarch's look. He had to fight to keep himself from fleeing.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Weasley, but my hair!Please, make them fix my hair. Please!"

His father would be appalled at his actions and outburst, but at this moment, Draco couldn't find it in him to care. It was his hair, for Merlin's sake! Only Draco's closest friends and his father knew how much he loved his hair. Well, Harry also knew about Draco's obsession with his hair, but the blond didn't know this. He loved his hair more than even his family's fortune. His friends all decided that it was a good thing that Draco only had the one insane quirk- all the rest were only slightly insane-otherwise he would have lost his fortune years ago.

The Weasleys stared at Draco in shock, never having seen a Malfoy act this way before. He was… to put it bluntly, he looked so human and approachable. Mrs. Weasley was reminded that even
though Draco was a Malfoy, he was still just a child, a child like any of her children, except he'd probably had no real family love in his life, just like poor Harry. She smiled kindly at him, and promised herself that she would enfold him in her care and spread out her nurturing love. The twins were thinking that this bloke could be some real fun, once they and of course Harry, could get friendly enough to melt his icy and uptight exterior. And Ginny was just drooling on the floor.

"What are you all staring at? Mrs. Weasley, please. Don't make me beg." Draco turned watery eyes to Molly, and she felt like she wanted to laugh. Who knew a Malfoy could simply be adorable?

"Make him beg, Mum!"

"Yeah, I'll get a camera. Should cheer Harry up when he sees it."

"Fred, George, that's enough. There, Draco love, it's all right." Molly lifted her wand and swished it around his head, making the blond boy flinch every time the wand came close to his hair. Then he nearly wept when the spell Mrs. Weasley used didn't work. She tsked and turned to glare at her sons, who were quick to point to Ginny as the culprit. "Ginny! What were you thinking? Now I expect this kind of thing from your brothers, but not you…"

"Oi!"

"What did you use? Finite doesn't work!" Draco's eyes were squeezed tight by now. He was trying not to have a panic attack.

"It's just a spell I created for a new product for Fred and George's store. It's harmless, I promise."

"You call this harmless! Weaslette, if you don't fix it right now, I will hang you by your long fire hair!"

"Merlin, Draco. Calm down. See, it's gone." Ginny did some elaborate waving with her wand, and Draco clutched at his hair when he felt some movement. When he found it back to normal, he dropped his hands and glared at Ginny.

"I'm going to get you back for that."

Ginny grinned and winked at him. "I really hope so."

Draco was so surprised that he dropped the glare and stepped back. He thought he should get out of there before he was embarrassed any further.

"Thank you, Mrs. Weasley." He gave her a small smile that she reciprocated with a smile ten times brighter, and then the Weasley family watched him point his chin up in the air and saunter out of the kitchen.
Draco Malfoy was not comfortable. Not in the least, and being uncomfortable was not something he was used to. And now he was lying in an uncomfortable bed, beside Harry's bed, which made the situation even more uncomfortable, and he'd just had an uncomfortable conversation with Pomfrey and Dumbledore about how he'd saved Harry from some pain. Pomfrey explained that he was to have bed rest because what he had done to Harry had affected his own body to a degree. At the time when he first arrived at Grimmauld Place, Draco felt the effects but had ignored the aches and pains singing through his body. It had been easy to ignore thanks to the adrenaline rush coming from the situation, but now he felt it, and he winced as the discomfort flared at the slightest movement. Madam Pomfrey assured him that he would feel better by tomorrow afternoon. That wasn't really soon enough in Draco's opinion.

And now he was lying there, in the early hours of the morning, waiting to have another uncomfortable discussion with his godfather. He wasn't used to talking about his feelings, but he was so confused at the moment that he had to talk to somebody. Draco had always looked up to his godfather, respected him. Severus was a good listener to Draco, and he almost always gave back good advice.

"Draco, we can talk tomorrow, after you've had some sleep. The jolt from the power of your healing abilities has shocked your body. You will be tired for a few days but the soreness should disappear tomorrow."

Draco didn't want advice tonight so he ignored his godfather's concern for his health and began to speak as if he hadn't heard Severus. "How could I do what I did with Potter? I don't understand what came over me."

"Are you speaking about helping with the pain? Or are you referring to your feelings towards Potter while you did this?"

"I'm not sure, perhaps both."

"I've heard of instances when a person is able to remove pain from another wandlessly, but I will have to do some research and then we can discuss it more."

Draco realized Severus was being evasive. He knew more than he was letting on, and Draco was sure Dumbledore also knew something, as his damn eyes had been twinkling brilliantly the entire time he'd had that uncomfortable discussion with Draco.

"I don't hate him. I haven't for a long time. I should have wanted to kill him for sending my father to prison, but I didn't. And I... I feel like I want to protect him, Severus. I almost killed his relatives. There was this rage pulsing through me, almost uncontrollable. I felt I could actually kill... and the worst of all this is the fact that I..." Draco looked up into his godfather's face with wide silver eyes that bordered on hysterical. "I had a pleasant conversation with some of the Weasleys. And I didn't even kill that chit after she hexed my hair!"
Severus would have laughed had he not known how to control himself. Draco looked so devastated by his civility with Weasleys, and he knew all about his godson's fixation with his hair.

"I think I've been possessed! That can be the only explanation," Draco said hopefully. But Severus shook his head.

"Draco, that's not possible. Upon entering the headquarters of the Order, anything possessed or under possession would have immediately been expelled from our location. You wouldn't be here if you were possessed."

"Well then what is it?" Draco hissed, annoyed as hell. Severus raised one dark eyebrow at the tone of his voice, and then rose from his chair.

"Perhaps it is denial." Severus smirked at him before turning and walking towards the door.

"What are you talking about?" Draco glared at him as he lay down again with his arms crossed over his chest.

_He looks like a petulant child_, Severus thought with equal parts fondness and disgust. "Draco, I seem to remember you stopped your confrontations with Potter last year at Hogwarts. And when you two did interact, it wasn't as volatile as it was before. You weren't cold with Potter any more, were you? Don't pretend that tonight has been the catalyst."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Draco murmured, looking away from the Potion's Master over to Potter. Severus watched as his godson glared at Potter, but then after a moment, that look softened into something else; something that Severus was not prepared to see. Oh Merlin!

"Take your sleeping draught!" he demanded before quickly leaving the room.

Draco looked at the door as it shut and he glared good and hard at it before turning his glare to the ceiling. He had no intention of taking the sleeping potion. He didn't want it! He didn't want anything to disturb his thoughts; not even sleep.

Harry ran along unhurried in the gray maze he'd created within his mind. He wasn't really thinking of anything, even the nightmares he'd been having. Something would always come next. He had been jumping from one dream to another since losing consciousness and the last nightmare had been brutal. But he was resolved to the situation. He was prepared to not ever escape this nightmare because he figured he'd be saving more lives if he weren't around anymore.

There was no reason to hide here either and that a plus because he was tired of hiding. Sure he was hiding within his own mind right now but at least in the confines of his brain he didn't have to hide who he truly was. There was no point in sliding that happy go lucky mask on everyday for the sake of his 'friends' or for Dumbledore. Harry had never really been given the chance in life to figure out who he was; to look inside himself and find who he wanted to be instead of just being Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived. If he'd been anyone else and without the puppet strings, when Ron had gone crazy on him when he'd found out that Harry was gay, he would have blasted the redhead to Hades. I shouldn't have really been surprised, he thought bitterly. Ron was known for making rash decisions and it wasn't the first time he'd turned his back on Harry, just like others from Gryffindor had at the end of last term.

Harry shook his head as he turned to walk down another dull gray abstract hallway. He knew that if Voldemort were not defeated than that would mean the end of everyone's world, but seriously how was he supposed to accomplish the feat of destroying the insane snake face when he was alone?
Harry knew it would be impossible to do it by himself, but he had no one really. And his friends? My old friends, he thought bitterly, they were never strong enough anyway. Except for Hermione and Ginny. But they were gone now. None of the Weasley's wanted to have anything to do with him. At least that's what Ron told him. And without support, did he really have a chance?

"But it has to be done. I have to defeat him. Which means I have to get out of here and develop my own plans." He spoke out loud to give himself a sort of pep talk. He'd begun to get tired of his pity party.

"Stay here," a voice said close beside Harry; a familiar voice. "We want you gone. Out of our lives. Away forever."

Harry turned and stared in surprise at Ron, who was standing not five feet away. And the look on his former friend's face could rival one of Malfoy's nastier sneers.

"You've always been a freak, Potter. And now you're a buggering faggot freak! Stay here, where you'll be happier. Because no one is ever going to love you."

"No, you're wrong."

Ron grinned and looked to his side where the air grayed and Hermione materialized. She smiled at Harry, her eyes sad and pitying. "It's true, Harry. No one will love you. No one even cares. I never wanted to tell you before because we needed you."

"No!" his scream echoed all around, the echo seeming to get louder even as it faded. "I don't believe you!"

"We're only telling you the truth," Hermione said and nodded as if what they were saying was printed in some book.

"Face it, Harry. You should never have been born," Ron spat.

"Why are you two doing this?" Harry was shaking his head, tears falling down his face. He had been hoping at least Mione wouldn't have turned her back on him completely, but he'd been mistaken. No one cared….

He suddenly remembered lying at the bottom of the stairs at the Dursleys, silver eyes flashing with concern as his head was being cradled. Draco had looked like he cared. It was an absolutely ridiculous thought, but Harry couldn't seem to let it go. He grasped onto that feeling of being with Draco like a lifeline and as these thoughts materialized, so did the person he had been thinking about.

Draco Malfoy stood a few feet in front of Ron and Hermione, smiling in a mocking manner at him while his silver orbs were glazed with disdain. "Really Potty? What do you think you can do?" he drawled. "Do you honestly think you can defeat the Dark Lord?" Draco paused to run a hand lightly over his gelled slicked back hair. Harry thought this odd since Malfoy hadn't been gelling his hair for the past two years.

"You're useless, Potter!" Harry flinched back and trembled from the hate that was pouring off of Draco. He hadn't felt that since the end of Fifth year, and it pained him more than anything. "No one needs you." Draco took a few steps closer, a malicious smile upon his lips. "I will never need you." He took another step forward and Harry started backing away, shaking his head at the utter hate in Malfoy's eyes. "I will never want you. No one will ever want you. It's better if you stay here."

Harry kept backing away, but he started to nod, thinking maybe Draco was right. He felt all his strength leaving him, the air condensed, making it harder for him to breathe. Maybe it would be
Harry kept backing away until his back hit something warm and solid. Startled, Harry looked over his shoulder and found his nose level with a shoulder. Harry tried to remain calm, but when he looked up and met hot silver eyes, he couldn't help but gasp.

Draco's thoughts were still in turmoil just before dawn, when he was kicked out of brooding mode by a noise coming from the other bed. He immediately jumped out of bed and hurried over to Harry's bed. He choked back a startled gasp when he caught sight of Harry's eyelids flickering as if he were on the very edge of consciousness. Wary of touching him, Draco leaned over till their noses were almost touching. He had to remind himself to focus solely on Harry's closed eyes and not on the inviting mouth very near his own.

"Potter?" his voice was soft, almost scared. And Draco was scared. Frightened Harry would actually wake up and he would have to deal with his obsessive thoughts and feelings for him. But he was more terrified that Harry would not wake. "Potter, if you don't wake up, I'll kill you."

Harry didn't respond. It became apparent that Harry was fighting something in his mind, and when Draco realized what was happening, he immediately grabbed the other boy's head, placing his palms firmly over Harry's temples and shut his eyes, being driven by some unknown instinct. Instantly Draco's consciousness was pulled down through his arms, out of his palms and fingers, and into Harry's mind. It was an odd feeling and entirely too uncomfortable for Draco's tastes. After the dizziness departed him, Draco began his venture through Harry's nightmares.

"Potter, you are one fucked up wizard!" he yelled out some time later and grinned as his voice echoed throughout the dismally gray hallways he'd been making his way through. He hoped Harry heard the echo. Then he sighed, "but so am I."

"No!"

The yell echoed all around, and he immediately recognized it as Harry. Draco stopped and frowned at the passageways before him. There were three choices. He could go left, right, or straight on. The choice would have been easy if he knew which way Harry was.

"Come on, Potter. Say something else," he muttered.

"Why are you two doing this?"

There! It came from the right. Draco took off running, hoping this was the right way. He ran down a hallway that seemed to be entirely too long. After a couple of minutes he slowed to a fast walk when he heard voices drifting towards him. They were vaguely familiar. Then he stopped completely when he heard his own voice. It was eerie hearing his own voice when he hadn't opened his mouth. "You're useless, Potter." Draco jogged ahead through a thick fog. By the time it cleared, Harry could be seen backing away from dream Draco.

Draco found himself getting angry with Harry for believing the nightmare, and by the time Harry backed into him and looked up, the blond was trying to reel in his fury.

"Draco?" the shorter boy whispered.

Draco's focus was on the beautiful green eyes of the boy pressed against his chest and he smiled. His smile widened when he noticed how startled Harry was to see him actually smile. Draco leant forward and threw an arm over Harry's shoulder and across his chest, placing his palm over the other boy's rapidly beating heart. He felt an ember spark to life somewhere in his own chest when Harry
relaxed and pressed back further against him as if seeking protection and strength from him. Draco was suddenly feeling very protective over Harry and he tightened his arm around the slighter teen.

Draco's eyes turned cold and as angry as an ice storm, and for a moment Harry panicked, only to relax again when the blond turned those eyes on dream Draco. Without lifting his hand from Harry's chest, Draco simply raised one finger to point at the other Draco and spoke close to Harry's ear but loud enough for the psycho figments of Harry's imagination to hear.

"I hope to Merlin, Potter that you aren't actually listening to the shite this imposter is spewing."

Harry could only nod; it was the truth after all. He had been listening to figment Draco. The Draco holding him obviously didn't like that and he growled deep in his throat in anger. Harry had to fight back a moan as pleasure spiked in his stomach from the noise the blond made. It was really sexy—Now is not the time to think of that, Harry! he thought desperately, trying to get a hold of the situation.

"Look at his hair, Potter! He's obviously an imposter. I would never wear my hair like that."

And he's dead serious, Harry thought with a snort. "Yeah, you are my Draco," he replied without thinking.

For an instant, Draco froze. When he relaxed again, he bent to whisper in Harry's ear. "You hope so, Potter?"

Harry couldn't help it, and even though he was in his own mind, he couldn't control the blush creeping onto his face. "I- err… well, I."

"Yes you would, Malfoy!" Ron yelled out, and pointed to the dream Draco. "You wore you hair like that every day up until Sixth year, you ponce!"

Draco narrowed his eyes and pinned Ron with a nearly lethal glare. "That was then, Weasel. This is now," he replied with a low smooth drawl. He then turned back to Harry, smirking. "What were you saying?"

Harry's cheeks darkened and he stared hard somewhere over fake Draco, Ron, and Hermione's heads.

"What does it matter any way, Malfoy? You aren't the one who had to deal with him for the past six years. It's always been Harry this and Harry did that! YOU MAKE ME SICK!" Under Draco's arm, Harry flinched at the tone of his ex best friend's voice.

"Potter, stop listening to them," Draco began in a bored drawl. "You know the entire Wizarding world just falls at your feet. They adore you."

"No." Harry's voice was dull, sad, and resolved. "They only care about Harry Potter, the child wizard who is supposed to kill the Dark Lord for them. They don't care about me. No one really knows me. You were right, no one cares."

Again, Draco growled at the back of his throat. Allowing his arm to drop, he slid around until facing the emerald-eyed teen that was looking everywhere but at Draco's face.

"I don't recall ever having said that to you, Potter." Harry opened his mouth to object, but Draco went on before he could say a word. "I may have said a lot of rotten things to you, but I used to think the things I said were true. A Malfoy never lowers to the level of lying."
"Right. Like your father never lowered himself to lying….”

"Let's not go there right now."

"You're the one who started talking about Malfoys."

"Potter, I swear when we get out of here….”

Harry just smiled and nodded, and Draco rolled his eyes. But then Harry started screaming and clutched at his forehead." Har-" Draco gasped when Harry's arm shot out to roughly grab him by his collar and began walking backwards, pulling Draco with him.

"Voldemort."

The blond spun around and his eyes widened while his hand rushed to the waistband of the pajamas he was wearing to grope around for his wand.

"Potter, you idiot! Why is it that they have wands and we do not? Just like a Gryffindor to rush in without a plan," Draco muttered darkly, his heart was pounding so loudly it was the only thing he could hear as he stared at the snake like man before them; its red eyes gleaming wildly in the gray murky mass of Harry's mind. Of course the gorgeous ebony haired boy beside him merely shrugged unapologetically and continued to watch Voldemort while keeping one hand pressed against his burning scar.

Draco wanted nothing more than to ask if it were really the Dark Lord standing there and not something Harry was thinking up, but he kept his mouth shut, determined to stay silent and try to remain calm. He was surprised when as if his thoughts were heard, Harry replied, "yes that's really Riddle."

"Mister Malfoy. I did not expect to see you here. I must say that I am very displeased to find that you are the one ruining this fun little game I've set up within Potter's mind."

"Clearly your definition of fun is lacking, Tom. But I guess that's what comes from being an insane half-blooded wizard," Harry spat back.

While Draco's face remained a blank expressionless mask, inside he was screaming at Harry. Are you insane? This is the Dark Lord! You can't go around insulting the bloody Dark Lord, especially to what is left of his face!

Merlin, Malfoy, calm down! Voldemort's already making my head feel like it's being cut into pieces. I don't need your yelling to make it any worse! Besides, a pissed off Voldemort is better than a calm Voldemort.

No way, Potter! The angrier he gets the deadlier he gets…and…are we actually talking without opening our mouths?

He also becomes sloppier. And yes we are.

But can he hear us?

Dunno...why don't you just think up a nasty insult for him and see if he reacts?

No need to get touchy.

For a wild moment, Harry almost smiled. The thoughts Draco somehow transmitted to his mind also
came with an image of Draco pouting. *I was being serious. If you ask me, I don't think he can hear us. He would have reacted to that bit you said about him not having much of a face left.*

*What should we do, then?*

Harry shrugged. *No clue here.*

Draco huffed. *Is there ever?*

*Now who's being touchy?*

"It is obvious you two are speaking to each other, even if I cannot hear you speak. Interesting."

Voldemort looked very pleased.

"I don't see how it's any of your business, Tom!" Harry snapped. He was tired of Voldemort! The snake face really got on his nerves. The stupid monologues that always went with their confrontations. The tremendous pain that always slammed into his scar whenever snake face got extremely pissed or elated, or whenever he was just plain near. He was tired of it all and he didn't feel like dealing with all this shite right now. In fact, Harry didn't really feel like dealing with anything ever again.

Beside him, Draco seemed to twitch just slightly. Harry gasped when he felt the hard mental slap to his face that Draco had sent him.

*Don't do that. I never want to hear you say that again.*

*What do you care, Malfoy? Why the hell should I even listen to you?*

Draco had a sharp retort on the tip of his tongue when Voldemort finally spoke again. "I will enjoy watching your death, Harry Potter. And if you two are talking telepathically, then your death will be easier than ever before."

"You just keep talking, Tom…"

"Only a rare few circumstances will allow the ability to telepathically talk with a person. The circumstances of which I see no reason to discuss. But if I am right, your death will be agonizing."

Voldemort curled his lipless mouth into a semblance of a nasty smile. "Mr. Malfoy, I might have been lenient on you for not having joined me yet, but since you seem to have turned traitor and run to join that old fool, I will give you what you deserve."

For the first time since Voldemort appeared, Draco spoke aloud. "I have not chosen to fight for Dumbledore."

"Is that so? Well then, you shall come to me and receive my mark."

"No, I'm not going to fight for you. I'm with Potter."

Voldemort hissed with rage and pointed his wand at Draco. "Avada Kedavra!"

Harry yelled and leapt forward. Without thinking, Draco threw his arm out to the side to stop Harry from jumping in front of the curse. Their eyes met and locked. Draco momentarily wondered what the hell he was thinking by keeping Harry back from sacrificing himself for Draco. That's not something a Slytherin would do, allow himself to be the sacrifice. Why did he stop Harry?

Harry's mouth was open in a silent scream as the green light of the Killing Curse slammed into
"It is a shame really. He would have been a fine Death Eater."

Harry sank to his knees beside Draco's body, silent tears falling down his face as he looked into Draco's empty eyes. "Well, Mr. Potter. It seems we are alone at last. It's just as everyone says isn't it? No one will ever stay with you. No one wants you. And now that Mr. Malfoy is dead, you will follow in less than two days. I'll leave you here with a few of your acquaintances, shall I?"

Voldemort's laughter remained behind long after he was gone, leaving Harry alone with Draco's body, and Ron and Hermione. Harry paid no attention to them. He couldn't look away from Draco's pale face and remained there curled up like a fetus even after Draco's body disappeared.
"Poppy! Remove blondie off my godson!" Sirius demanded once he'd entered the room and immediately caught sight of Malfoy, whose body lay slumped over Harry's chest. Sirius charged forward and reached out to grab Draco to pull the youth away.

"Stop Sirius! We don't know what will happen if you do that," Madam Pomfrey said pushing the taller shaggy haired man away from the two boys.

"Why? What's going on?"

"It would have been wise to have asked that before barging in here, insipid mutt!" Severus hissed from his dark corner where he sat watching the boys. Yes, Snape was actually watching after both boys. He had a book in his lap from which he'd been trying to make sense of what was happening between Draco and Harry. "We're not sure what is going on, Black. But I assure you, having you here disturbing the peace is not going to help."

"This is my house, Snivellus, and Harry is my godson. If I want to be here than I have every right to be."

"Wizards, if you please!" The witch sent them both a hard glare. "I will send both of you out if you cannot get along. You aren't in school anymore which makes this rivalry ridiculous. You should have matured enough to realize that your actions and words are beneath you." The scolding Severus and Sirius were receiving was interrupted when Draco was suddenly thrown across the room and landed in a crumpled heap of robes at the feet of a surprised Sirius.

"Oi! Malfoy?" Sirius crouched down to get a better look at the kid and he noticed something troubling. "Poppy, he isn't breathing."

Madam Pomfrey pushed Sirius out of the way and rushed her wand over Draco. "I don't understand. The diagnostic says he's fine. He should be breathing."

"Do it again." Severus' tone was calm, but if someone were to look in his eyes, they would have seen how terrified for his godson he was.

"No change, Severus. Come; let's get him on the bed. We still have a bit of time."

After levitating Draco onto the bed next to Harry's, Madam Pomfrey sent a quick Patronus message to Dumbledore. After the 'bit of time' ran out, they were all thinking that nothing was going to work and that Draco Malfoy might never breathe again. Dumbledore entered and with one look at Draco, the twinkle in his eyes was replaced by feigned concern. Sirius looked at Severus then and saw the gut wrenching sadness and pain of loss swimming in those obsidian eyes. Never knew he had those kinds of feelings, Sirius thought. Human feelings. Weird. Sirius pulled his eyes away from Severus and turned back to the dying boy on the bed, eyes trailing over his familiar features. Draco looked so much like his father it was almost uncanny. His breath caught in painful memories at that.

Sirius turned to Harry to wrench away from those thoughts. Harry's pale face and black hair standing
out the most. They’d had a conversation about Malfoy at the beginning of the summer holiday before Dumbledore had forced Harry back to the Dursleys to ‘secure the blood wards’. Sirius had been surprised when Harry expressed his regret that he and Malfoy were enemies and that he wanted to rectify that. During sixth year Harry had an almost obsessive attitude about Draco Malfoy and had watched the blond closely all year.

Harry claimed to have witnessed changes in Draco; apparently the blond had stopped tormenting others, he’d stopped treating people like they deserved to be nothing more than mud under his dragon hide boots, and how Draco had withdrawn and was always caught in a contemplative mood. Harry explained to him that Draco had changed for the better and would make a good ally and friend and he also explained to Sirius how he thought the Slytherins were misunderstood and could be helpful to their side in the war. Sirius hadn't believed nor did he agree with any of it. It had been a difficult discussion and one they didn't walk away from without having several shouting matches under their belts.

Sirius didn't believe it then, and he didn't believe Malfoy had changed now, but he did know that whenever Harry woke up, and he was sure his godson would wake up, Harry would be devastated by the loss of the blond. He knew this because by the time that conversation had finished, Sirius had come away with the knowledge that Harry had some very strong feelings for little Malfoy and it wasn't just a friendship his godson was hoping for.

Sirius narrowed his eyes and stared at the pale face with growing blue lips and he cursed little Malfoy to Hades for being another problem that Harry had to fight his way through. But at the same time, he was panicked at the thought of how much Harry had been through already. How would his godson cope with such a loss, despite Sirius' thoughts that dealings with any Malfoys would lead you to nowhere but trouble. He was an expert on that. But Malfoy's death could very well be the last nail on the coffin and Harry might slip through all their fingers to be lost to those who love him forever.

Sirius rushed over to the bed and shoved Severus out of the way. "Damn you, Malfoy! You are not going to do this to him!" he shouted as he raised his fist above Draco's chest. "Wake. The. Hell. Up!" With each word, he pounded his fist against the teen's chest just over his heart. Pomfrey and Severus moved as one to stop Sirius but stopped themselves when Draco astonishingly responded.

Draco's back arched off the bed, his eyes staring open wide yet blind at the ceiling, and the only sound in the room to be heard was the loud shuddering inhale coming from his wide-open mouth.

"D-Draco?"

Severus' voice was raspy and his eyes looked suspiciously wet. He started when his godson starting to scream for Potter. "Harry! Harry, come back!"

"Move away, both of you!" Madam Pomfrey barked and started running diagnostics. "He's in shock, physically and mentally, but other than that he seems to be perfectly healthy. I will be running further tests."

"Harry!" The blond continued to scream, thrashing in his bed until Severus came forward and hit Draco across the face; a slap to each cheek.

"Calm yourself, Draco… That's right take deep breaths." Severus was happy to see that Draco was quickly coming back to consciousness. "Draco, can you hear me?"

"Yes," Draco coughed out and fell back against the pillows as he closed his eyes; his chest heaving in the air he had previously been deprived of. He opened his eyes again and saw nothing but a bright white light, though he could hear familiar voices. He bit back a moan of pain brought on when he
tried to move his head. What had happened to him? Where was he? He couldn't remember… someone was calling his name again.

"Draco?"

"What?"

"How do you feel?" Draco knew that voice.

"How do you think I feel, Sev? I feel like I've been run over by a pack of Hippogriffs."

"What were you doing with Harry?" someone barked at Draco, causing him to wince from the headache. Whose voice does that belong to? It was familiar, but Draco couldn't place it.

"Sirius, let's just make sure Mr. Malfoy is in good health before inquiring after anything else." Ah, that's the old fool. Then a thought hit him. Sirius. Sirius Black. Sirius was Harry's godfather. Harry!

"Someone must help him. The Dark Lord's invaded his mind!"

"Draco, calm down."

"Yeah. Who's with You-Know-Who?"

"Harry!"

"All right, Mr. Malfoy. Take a deep breath and tell us from the beginning. Then we will know best what to do." Draco nodded, for once listening to the headmaster without one snide thought. He took three deep breaths and began to speak, beginning with him sitting on the bed, and figuring out that Harry was battling a nightmare and told them everything that happened after, ending his tale at the present. He left the part out where he and Harry ended up conversing telepathically.

"Merlin! Does he really feel like that?" Sirius asked, staring with watery blue eyes at Harry. "Why does Voldemort think that he's condemned Harry to death by killing Draco?" he asked the headmaster.

"I am uncertain..." Dumbledore turned to Severus, his eyes narrowed just slightly. "Severus, have you any ideas?"

"You know just as much as I, Headmaster," Severus promptly answered, keeping his gaze locked onto Draco.

"Never mind. I need to go back and get the idiot Gryff before he decides to stay there permanently." Draco sat up and swung his legs over the side of the bed.

"Now wait just a minute, Mr. Malfoy, where do you think you're going?" Madam Pomfrey loomed over him. "You're not going anywhere right now. You were forcibly pushed out of Mr. Potter's mind and you had not been breathing. You need to remain in bed!"

Draco's eyes narrowed on the witch. He gritted his teeth and tried to explain as calmly as possible. "You don't understand how close to the edge Harry is. He's going to jump and stay forever if he isn't talked to. And if you know of someone else who is likely able to jump into Potter's mind, then please by all means Madam Pomfrey, let us know." He sounded calm, but really he felt anything but. He felt ready to jump out of his skin; his nerves were all tingling and his heart had yet to calm down since he regained consciousness. And all he wanted to was to get back to Harry.
A hand landed on his shoulder and squeezed gently. Draco turned and was surprised to see the headmaster looking at him with somber eyes. "Unfortunately you are correct, Draco." The headmaster said and then turned to his colleagues, while Draco jerked his shoulder free. "I'm afraid Mr. Malfoy can't wait. Harry will need someone now, and he seems to be the only one able to pass through the magical barriers Harry has placed around his mind. We cannot allow Harry to fade away. We need him."

_You had better stay away from him, you old manipulating fool._ Draco thought darkly. _Harry's mine._

"But Albus, Mr. Malfoy was nearly killed. He should be in bed resting."

"As much as I loathe to admit it, the headmaster is right. Draco must go. He is the only one who can. That's what all the signs are pointing to. Potter and Draco are connected."

Sirius nodded his head in agreement with Severus. "Yes. If Harry will listen to anyone at this point in time then it will be the little Malfoy."

Not wasting any more time, and ignoring his need to ask what exactly Black meant by that, Draco stood up and made his way over to Harry's bed, making sure he had his wand with him, even though he knew it wouldn't travel to where he was going.

_Right, you stupid Gryffindor. You're coming back with me, whether you like it or not._ Draco took a deep breath and placed his palms over Harry's temple again. It was somewhat of a surprise when the trip into the Gryffindor's mind wasn't as uncomfortable as before and it took less time for Draco to get over the disorientation.

He didn't know where to start looking but he figured finding the place where You-Know-Who had struck him with the Killing Curse would be the best place to start, even though he doubted everything would be just the same as it was before old snake face tried to kill him, the bastard! Nobody tries to kill a Malfoy and gets away with it.

He'd been walking for ages, and Draco was rapidly becoming frustrated when he had yet to find anything. And that was literally. For miles it seemed the foggy grayness went on with no change, except for Draco's disturbance here and there, but he continued to walk on. He picked one direction and stuck to it until becoming bored, and then sharply turned down another direction, almost continuously calling out Harry's name, making sure he hadn't suddenly gone deaf, as there was also no noise to be heard. Complete silence surrounded him; not even his own movements yielded any sound.

"This is ridiculous! I always knew his brain was full of nothing. Come on, Potter. WHERE ARE YOU?" _WHERE ARE YOU?_ He called out in his mind as well; trying to push his thoughts out passed the thick grayness on the off chance that he and Harry could still hear each other's thoughts. Having that ability had been strange and had seemed to mean something important.

_Draco?_

He hadn't expected an answer. Really he didn't, so when he heard Harry's voice in his head, Draco surprised and shamed himself when he jumped and screamed like a little girl.

_Yes, Potter_, he hissed angrily, trying to cover the embarrassment he felt. _Of course it's me. Who else did you expect? Where are you?_

_Draco's dead. I saw it. You're not real either. Leave me alone._

It was strange listening to that tone coming from Harry. It really wasn't what Draco expected. He
thought by now Voldemort would have tortured Harry's mind to hysterics or at least numbness, but that's not what it sounded like. Harry seemed to have a determined edge to his voice, as well as annoyance.

_The Dark Lord can't really kill in the mind, I guess. Your godfather saved me. I'll have to thank him for that._

_My godfather?_ Now Harry sounded hopeful.

_Yes. You know, your godfather, Sirius Black._

_How am I supposed to know if you're real or not?_

_We could argue about it here like this all day, or you could make this simple and tell me how to find you. I've been here for ages._

_Fine._

Draco sighed in relief and waited for Harry to tell him where to go.

_You should be able to sense my magical signature. I can sense yours and feel where you are._

_Right. Well then why don't you come find me? I'm tired of walking._

_Stop whining, you git. I would come to you but unfortunately that's not possible right now._

_Potter, if you're in another pity state, I swear…_ 

_No, I'm sort of passed that I guess. But I've made some decisions. And I would love to get out of here and get on with my plans, but I can't move. I need your help._

_Why can't you move?_ 

_I'm under some weird version of the Petrificus Totalus spell. I can't move or talk._

_Fine. I'll be there as soon as I can._

_Thanks Malfoy._

_Whatever, Potter. Just remember you owe me._

_I'd be happy to give you whatever you want, Draco_, Harry answered in a low tone.

Draco stopped walking suddenly. Maybe he was hearing things he only wanted to hear, because he could have sworn Potter had just purred his name at him, and it really shouldn't have sent as many shocking tremors through his body as it did.

_With a shake of his head, he closed his eyes to focus back on Harry's magical signature and began to follow it again. Eventually Draco passed through a thick fog, and was surprised to see a large group of people standing in a half circle around a corner of the room. He couldn't see what was in front of the group, but after listening to some of the things these familiar figments were spewing from their mouths it didn't take Draco any time at all to figure out who would be against the wall._

_Potter? Are you in front of all those people? Is that the entire Weasley family I see? Oh look I even see that stupid oaf, Hagrid._
Don't call him stupid. Stop insulting people and get your arse up here. I can't leave until you get here.

Draco mentally rolled his eyes and began pushing his way through the crowd of people who were spouting out their hatred for the boy. When he got to the front and could finally see Harry, Draco was surprised to find the boy crouched down in a shadowed corner staring at two people in particular with a dead expression. Draco looked closer and realized with a gasp that he was looking at James and Lily Potter, Harry's parents. And his mother was being vicious.

"Had I known what would come from sacrificing myself for you, I would have stepped aside and let that curse have you. I hope you don't think we're proud of you or that we love you, because we don't. We could never love someone like you."

Lily Potter said all this in a natural calm voice that was very believable and even Draco would have started to believe her words if he hadn't seen what was behind her eyes; there was simply nothing there. She wasn't real, and what she was saying meant nothing.

"Potter?"

Harry's eyes snapped away from his parents and he breathed a mental sigh of relief when he spotted Draco. Voldemort's not here. After he... well after you were gone, I was able to build up my Occlumancy shields again. Don't know why I didn't do that before. Anyway, he can't get in anymore. But he was able to leave this little party for me before he had to go.

"How nice of him."

Hmm.

"You are stuck in that position?"

Yes. So if you could hurry up and do Finite, it would be appreciated.

"How am I supposed to do that? I don't have my wand, remember," Draco said, sneering in disdain at the Potters and all the others in the large group throwing negative words towards them. Harry was pleasantly surprised to not be the one receiving the look of death from Draco.

You have your wand now. Look.

"How in Hades did you manage to get my wand to come through with me, yet you can't get out of a simple spell?"

Not in the mood to talk about anything right now, okay Malfoy? Just release the spell. I want to get out of here.

Draco nodded and found his wand tucked into the waistband of his pajamas. How the hell had he missed it before? He quickly undid the spell on Harry and was more than a little surprised and wary when all it took to undo a spell done by the Dark Lord was a simple Finite Incantatum.

"Right. Now that we've got you moving, care to enlighten me as to how we are going to get out of here." Draco leaned down and grasped Harry's arm to help him stand. Neither of them cared to notice when Draco did not let go of Harry's elbow after he was on his feet. "The only reason why I woke up last time was because that medieval psychopath tried to kill me." He felt Harry stiffen beside him.

"Err...I'm going to be honest with you, and I don't really care how you take it, but that affected me."
Harry stared at the ground while he spoke, rubbing the back of his neck in an obvious nervous gesture. "It was painful and I nearly lost it. It's unexplainable, but that's how it was. I just wanted to let you know."

Draco was surprised at the honest confession, but only a little because Harry had always been easy to read. It was something that always attracted Draco to the brunet. The way his face revealed his every emotion and right now he looked very much confused. It was cute the way his brow was wrinkled in perplexed lines, and his eyes were wide open as if looking for the answer. He looked down at Harry and nearly smiled. He quite liked the fact that he was taller than him. It made him feel like the protector, the one to be leaned on. And Harry needed someone- Draco- to take care of him while he took care of the fate of the Wizarding World. Two faced idiots that they were.

He didn't say any of that however, and only nodded, telling Harry that he understood.

"I don't know what's going on here," Harry stated, silently indicating the strange connection they seemed to share.

"Neither do I. But I think I know who does."

"Good. We can deal with that when the time comes."

Harry was back to looking like the assured Gryffindor that he'd always been, but Draco was worried. Harry hadn't once looked back to the group of figments still belting out curses since he'd laid eyes on Draco, but he knew Harry could hear them, sure he was listening, and probably storing everything away. He was sure that sooner or later, it would crack through Harry's shields, and when it happened it wouldn't be a pleasant episode. Draco promised himself then and there that he wouldn't allow Harry to go through that alone. Draco would be there and he would surround Harry by people who loved him, who were completely loyal to him. And maybe he'd have some new friends as well. He still needed help getting Pansy, Blaise, Theo, Vince, and Greg out of their situations, and he was pretty sure that Harry would help if asked. All Draco would need to do was prove to Harry that the other Slytherins wanted to fight alongside Harry just as he did.

"Now it's time to go, so do whatever it is you need to do to get us out of here."

Harry had managed to get them out of there faster than either of them could really explain, but the transfer from Harry's mind back into his body was not painless. When he felt himself realign with his body, there was an explosion of voices and bright needling light, which spiraled around squeezing his head in vice like agony. And by the groans coming from the body below him, he suspected Harry was feeling the same way. Harry's raspy, "bloody hell," confirmed it.

"For the love of Merlin, will everybody shut up and put out the lights!" Draco cried out as he backed away from Harry's bed.

"Yes, he's quite right. Everybody out now." Madam Pomfrey said, waving her arms in a sweeping motion, herding the visitors towards the door while Severus helped Draco to his own bed.

"Headmaster, I shall inform you when I have finished their exams."

"Very good, Poppy," the headmaster quipped before closing the door behind himself and Severus as they left.

Madam Pomfrey turned to her charges and stood at the end between the two beds, scrutinizing the boys closely. Both were frowning and staring at the ceiling, but with two different looks on their faces. Harry, the poor dear, was staring straight up with wide terrified eyes; there was a world of hurt
and need in those expressive green eyes, begging for reassurance. Draco's frown was colder, more controlled on his face. She couldn't get what was going on inside his head; even his eyes were cold silver walls.

"Now then, how do you feel, Mr. Potter?" she asked, moving to his side and started to run her wand over his slight body.

"I'm fine, Madam Pomfrey. Just a bit of a headache. It'll be gone in a moment, so there's nothing for you to be worried about."

"Don't be ridiculous, Mr. Potter! You have much more than a headache, I'm sure. You sustained serious bodily damage yesterday and then put yourself into a magically induced coma."

"I'm sorry to cause you so much trouble," Harry whispered. The mediwitch could only stare, astonished at his tone. Where was the bright eyed, spirited young man she'd seen last term?

"Oh Harry, you could never cause me too much trouble, dear." She softly brushed the fringe of black hair away from his surprised eyes. "I'll bet you're tired, aren't you?" she nodded her head, answering for him and picked up a vial of potion from the tray on the table beside the bed. "Here now. Dreamless Sleep Potion. You'll get a full rest."

"Are you sure he should be going back to sleep so soon? He only just woke up."

"Thank you for your concern, Mr. Malfoy, but I assure you I know what I'm doing."

"Thanks," Harry muttered after she held out the vial to him. "I could do with some undisturbed sleep." He tossed back to contents of the vial and grimaced as it made its way down to his stomach. "That never gets any better."

"And you too, Mr. Malfoy." Pomfrey handed him his vial once she'd finished Draco's tests.

"I don't want to take this. I don't need it," Draco drawled, his nose rising up into the air.

"Mr. Malfoy, I promise I wouldn't give this to you if you really didn't need it. But you do, and therefore you will take it. You both have lost a large amount of energy and sleep will help you recharge."

"Look, this isn't Hogwarts. You can't make me take this." Draco crossed his arms over his chest as if that was all that needed to be said.

Harry would have laughed had he enough energy, because Madam Pomfrey looked on the verge of blasting Malfoy's mouth open with a spell and throwing the potion down his throat. "You're being difficult again, Draco."

Harry had rolled over onto his side and was watching Draco with drooping eyelids, the sleeping draught working already. There was something almost soft, caressing about the way Harry was looking at him and Draco's breath caught in his throat. Without another word, he grabbed the potion from Madam Pomfrey's outstretched hand and drank it down. "I'm never difficult, Po...Harry. It's everyone else around me that is."

It was clear to even Madam Pomfrey that using Harry's first name had been the right thing to do when Harry broke out into a huge sleepy grin. The mediwitch was more surprised to see Draco smile warmly in return before the potion started to overtake him too and he lay back down amongst the sheets and blankets of his bed. Their behavior towards each other was confusing. Especially to someone who was used to seeing the two young men fighting and regarding each other with hate.
"Oh well. Time to report to Albus."

_Harry? Can you hear me?_ Draco thought while trying to fight the potion just for a little longer. He wanted to know if they could still hear each other, still feel each other telepathically, or if it had been some fluke that happened just within the confines of Harry's mind.

_Hmmm?_ Harry's reply was like a soft caress against his tired mind.

_Harry, you will promise me right now that you are going to wake up after this._

_M'kay. I promise this time…_ Harry's voice faded as sleep took him. As Draco fell into unconsciousness, he frowned. He hadn't at all been pleased by Harry's reply. But at least there was a reply. And for some reason, Draco was happy that they could still communicate like that. What was his world coming to?

"How are they, Poppy?" Albus Dumbledore asked from his sitting chair near the fire in the library once the mediwitch had shown up to report.

Poppy frowned at him and he was very aware that it had nothing to do with her report on the boys. The others, Minerva, Severus, and Sirius were all listening intently to what the mediwitch had to say. Severus sat next to Dumbledore with his elbows on his knees, his chin grasped between his long fingers. And Minerva, bless her, was sitting on the edge of her seat, waiting patiently.

"Mr. Malfoy will be perfectly fine after a couple days rest. Mr. Potter, however, will need to take nutrient potions to help with his malnourished state for weeks to come, and I suggest we make sure he takes the dreamless draught at least three times a week until we are sure he is sleeping properly. He will not heal completely without the proper amount of sleep. Not only does he suffer severe hydration and lack of nutrition, but his mind and body is severely exhausted. I think it's safe to say he hasn't been sleeping well for a very long time," she ended with a dark tone at the end.

"I will see to it that you receive a fresh batch of nutrient potions first thing in the morning, Poppy."

Sirius was more surprised than anyone at Snape's cooperation. Since when did the snarky Potion's Master hurry to do anything helpful for Harry? Or anyone for that matter?

"Headmaster? What are we going to do about Potter's home situation?" Minerva asked, sitting forward in her chair. "I hate to say this, Albus, but I told you so. I told you Potter's remaining family was the worst sort of muggles imaginable."

"I know, Minerva. But at the time, there was no other choice. He had to be protected…"

"Protected? PROTECTED?" Sirius bounced from his seat and pointed a trembling finger at the somber older wizard. "Is that what you call what's happened to him? How could you condone the action of sending him back year after year? Was it that you were unaware of what was going on? I find that hard to believe."

"I was not aware that the abuse was so volatile."

"But you were aware that there was abuse of some kind?" Poppy exclaimed, utterly shocked.
"And he never said anything?" Severus asked skeptically.

"I remember him bringing the subject of his family and home up once. He wanted to know if there wasn't somewhere else he could go during the summer holidays. He said he and his family didn't really get along..." a snort that suspiciously came from the direction of Sirius Black interrupted him. "Harry said the Dursleys hated him and the only time they weren't showing him how much hate consumed them was when asleep. I didn't believe him, of course. Not to that extent. He was only embellishing on the truth. I understood he was only saying these things because he was going through a normal teenage phase and was letting his imagination get the best of him."

"Did you just say his imagination?" barked Sirius, eyeing Dumbledore incredulously just as the others were doing.

"Albus," Minerva whispered, staring at him in disbelief.

"Headmaster, you sent Potter back to that torment time and again because you thought the boy was making it all up? You know better than anyone how I despised Potter, but I can honestly say I've never known him to lie outrageously like that." The others nodded with support for Severus' thought. "I would have at least looked into his accusations to find the truth of the matter!"

"There was no reason to suspect the Dursleys were doing anything more than being overzealous with Harry's chore list."

"At least you could have checked up on him."

"I did not feel it was necessary."

"This is insane! You are insane!" Sirius yelled out, his hands darted up to pull at his shaggy black hair. "The entire time, you knew! He told you, asked you for help, and you didn't so much as lift a finger! He asked you for help!"

"Sirius, you need to calm down now," Minerva urged, though she too was feeling a little betrayed by Dumbledore's lack of action regarding Harry.

"No! No, I will not calm down! This is not something that will go away, that I'll forgive and forget. Just like I'll never forget I was left to rot in Azkaban an innocent man!" Sirius turned to glare into the fire. "From here on out, the only person I'm loyal to is my godson."

"You must be reasonable, Sirius..."

"No," the Animagus growled. "I'm tired of your manipulations. They never seem to work out how you plan them, Headmaster. You are always willing to sacrifice people we love for the Greater Good. I'm not going to do it anymore. Harry is the only family I have left, and I let him down, just like everyone has let him down. I'm going to spend the rest of my life making up for it. You and the Order will have to go on without me." He threw one more cold look at Dumbledore, ignored the rest, and strode out of the room.

Sirius was silent all the way up to Harry's room. He conjured a chair and sat down beside the bed, but he couldn't seem to look at Harry, so instead kept his eyes on the floor. He was swamped by the pain of guilt, for letting down James and Lily, and especially Harry. "I swear to you I will never again allow Dumbledore to send you anywhere you don't want to go, pup."

Sirius looked up then, but instead of Harry, he focused on the little Malfoy. He was sleeping on his back, his blond hair fell over his closed eyes and cheek, his face was to the side as if he had fallen asleep looking at Harry. It was surprising to see a faint smile on the normally sneering lips. Sirius
gathered his courage and looked down at his godson. He choked back a sob when he saw Harry was facing little Malfoy, and there was a smile on his face as well. Anything to bring a smile onto Harry's face was a godsend to Sirius. He hadn't seen Harry really smile in months.

"You've surprised me, Black. I must admit to it being a pleasant surprise," Severus' voice penetrated the quiet as he glided to stand beside Malfoy's bed.

"I really don't care what you think right now, Snape. But I meant what I said. The only side I'm on is his side," Sirius said, nodding to Harry. "And Dumbledore is not on Harry's side. Surely after all this time, you've felt there wasn't something right with him, Snape?"

Severus raised his wand to first conjure himself a chair and once that was done he cast a silencing charm on the room before casting a bubble of silence around himself, the two beds and Black. Sirius, for his part, watched all this with a raised eyebrow.

"I'll assume you realize this will be an important conversation," Snape said slowly, his onyx eyes staring coldly into Sirius' surprised blue eyes. "Surely I don't have to make myself clear to you."

Sirius sat back in his chair, trying to absorb the shock and shut it away. He understood what Snape was saying, and he wasn't sure he wanted to have this conversation. But...he was truthful when he proclaimed his allegiance with Harry and that meant he went where Harry went, and knowing his godson, it would probably be well far away from Dumbledore when he had the strength for it. And lately he'd been sure that Snape wasn't just playing for Dumbledore's side anymore. It would be good information to know what was going on with everyone. And it couldn't hurt to hear what old Snivellus had to say. So he sat forward in the chair and gave Snape a sharp nod.

"Right then. We are only having this discussion to protect our godsons. I only want what is best for Draco, and Draco feels that Harry Potter's allegiance is what is best. However, my godson is still a pureblood and a Dark wizard. And like most Dark wizards, he still believes in certain ideals; ideals, I'm sure, that you still believe in, even if you are a Gryffindor."

"Let's just leave the school houses out of this, Snape. It will only complicate matters."

"This is true. How very astute of you to have recognized that."

"Watch it, Snivellus. Anyway, yes I still do believe in some things as others do. But the man you know is going about it the wrong way; the insane way. He's obsessed by his plans to kill Harry."

"Perhaps this wizard I know has seen the error of his ways. Perhaps he has made some changes in his organization. What would you say then?"

"I would say that it doesn't matter," Sirius growled. "That wizard just tried to kill Harry, and he tried to do that by killing Draco Malfoy, whom you just said you only wanted what was best for him. Why are you trying to talk to me about You-Know-Who?"

"He's made a grave error, he's come to terms with that and plans to change things. However, he still hasn't completely formed these new plans of his yet. I never liked Potter, but I know his power rivals that of Dumbledore and Voldemort, and the Dark Lord knows this. He can't go anywhere if Potter is in the way. But if Potter were to back Voldemort's new plans, then his life wouldn't be the first thing Voldemort thinks about taking."

Severus sat back and watched as Black tried to work through everything he had told him. He could see distrust was weighing heavily on his decision. "It is right that you should not trust me," Sirius snorted at that. "But you don't have to take my word for it. There are always ways of discovering the
Sirius started to nod. "I can't make any decisions until I've spoken to Harry. We all know how much he hates Voldemort for what he did to his parents, what happened to me, how his life has turned out… I don't think he'll ever switch sides like that."

"He may when I tell him what Dumbledore has been doing. I've come across some interesting pensive memories… Dumbledore has done far more damage than anything the Dark Lord could have done."

"Tell me."

"No. I will discuss this with you only when Potter is ready to hear it. Also I wanted to discuss this with the werewolf as well."

"Moony?" Sirius perked up. "Why would you even ask for Remus? I thought you couldn't stand the sight of him."

"We came to an understanding not long ago. And since he's far more intelligent than you are, it would be prudent to have him on our side."

"Whoa, Snape. There is no our side. Not now. Not yet. Maybe not ever. Understand?"

Severus waved his wand, breaking the silent bubble around them. "We'll speak again when the boys have woken," he said and then stood and walked out of the room.
As soon as Ginny Weasley Apparated alongside her mum and landed at the Burrow, she made her way through the tall house in search of her mini-minded brother's girlfriend. She wasn't convinced Hermione was completely against Harry, if at all, and Ginny wanted to get the older girl alone to talk without Ron's annoying presence affecting everything Hermione did or said. First place she checked was the kitchen, but only her mum and Charlie were there.

"Charlie! When did you arrive?"

"'Lo, sis. Just got in actually." Charlie stood from the kitchen table to give Ginny a hug, which she returned with great pleasure and exuberance.

"Are you staying long? What about your dragons?"

Charlie laughed and slung his arm around her shoulders. "They're hardly my dragons and they'll be fine. I'm not the only one who does work with them. Someone will pick up where I left off until Dumbledore has no use for me and I can return to Romania."

Ginny frowned and stared at the scarred kitchen table. Professor Dumbledore had been doing that a lot lately. Calling her family in for missions. She hardly saw her dad anymore due to work and the constant stream of missions he'd been put on, and she hated waiting desperately each night for her father to return unharmed. Even now, Bill was on a mission with Professor Lupin and no one had heard from them in two days! And for what? In the end, the missions carried out seemed to have no impact whatsoever on the war. It seemed that Dumbledore was only ordering things done just to look busy, using people however he wanted, and Ginny couldn't think kindly on that when it was her family being used.

"Did you hear about Harry?" she asked suddenly. Charlie shook his head.

"I heard he and Ron had a row, but that's all I've heard. Have they resolved their little issue yet?"

"It's not like that. Ron is being a git…"

"Ginny!" Molly swung around from the oven to give her daughter a stern look.

"Well he is! He's turned his back on Harry. Says he doesn't want anything to do with him. When Ron found out about Harry getting hurt, Ron said it served Harry right. He's gone completely mental!"

"I'm sure your brother just needs some time to himself, Ginny. Everything will be fine between them once Harry is awake, I'm sure," Molly said, but Ginny had her doubts. She didn't think Ron and Harry's friendship would ever be the same again. And it wasn't like Ron deserved another chance anyway.

"Harry's hurt?" Charlie interjected. Ginny nodded. "Mum will explain. I need to talk to Hermione. Have you seen her?"
Molly shook her head and Charlie looked towards the stairs. "She may be up there. Ron said something about her not feeling well. Check your room."

Ginny smiled brightly at her brother and threw her arms around him again for another hug. "Thanks, Charlie. I'm happy to see you."

"I love you too, Gin."

Ginny smiled and kissed her brother's cheek, gave a lazy wave and bolted up the stairs, ignoring the creaks and groans of the old wooden stairs. She hurried to her room and was relieved to find Hermione alone and reading cross-legged on the second bed in the room. Ginny quietly shut the door and placed the strongest locking charm she knew on the door and a strong silencing spell on the room.

"Hermione, we need to talk." Ginny strode over to her friend's bed and sat down, noticing Hermione's red and puffy eyes and pale, drawn features. Clearly Hermione was upset about something.

"Of course, Ginny." Hermione smiled and shut her book. "What would you like to talk about?"

Ginny heaved a great sigh and crossed her arms over her chest. "I'm sure you can guess…." "Oh. Ronald."

"Yes, him. Hermione, he's been an absolute pig!"

"I know, but he's just under a lot of stress right now…"

"Don't do that. Please don't make excuses for him. I'm his sister, Hermione. I know him, I love him, but frankly at this point I don't care whether he wants anything to do with Harry or not. Harry's too good for him, anyway. But I can't stand by and watch you do this to Harry. I see no reason why you would willingly turn your back on him, after everything you three have been through."

Hermione opened her mouth to say something, then thought better and shut it again, her gaze fixed upon her hands resting in her lap. There was an uncomfortable silence for a minute before Ginny caught sight of Hermione's trembling lips, and the shine of water in the older girl's eyes.

"Hermione, you of all people should understand that you're allowed to speak your thoughts. Don't be afraid of what Ron thinks. He shouldn't have put you in the position you're in, expecting you to choose between Harry and himself."

"I know, Gin. I don't understand this change in him, and it just gets so hard sometimes to see the old Ron, and I get so sad and feel so useless when I recognize that our relationship doesn't feel right, anymore. Do you know what I mean?"

Ginny nodded. "No one knows what's gotten into him. But he needs to quit it before we quit him."

"Ginny! You can't mean that."

Ginny's sigh was sad and dramatic. Then she flipped her hair over her shoulder and gave Hermione a cheeky grin. "Maybe I do, maybe I don't. We'll see. But seriously, this is about Harry more than anything. Do you even know what happened to him? Malfoy told us the story."

"Wait, what? Malfoy?"
"Yeah, it gets better, but first let me tell you about Harry." Hermione nodded and leaned forward, all her attention on what Ginny was saying. "Well…" Ginny didn't know where to start actually. She was about to tell her friend something that would more than likely send the older girl into hysterics, because Ginny was sure Hermione never knew about the abuse he had received from his relatives. "Ginny?"

Ginny nodded and sort of just blurted it all out in one go, hoping she didn't forget anything Malfoy had told her so that she wouldn't have to repeat herself. Also hoping Hermione would have no questions, but by the time Ginny finished, Hermione was barely restraining herself from raising her hand.

"What happened to the Dursleys?"

"His aunt and cousin are at Number Twelve," Ginny's eyes glittered darkly with ideas of vengeance against Harry's relatives. "But I think they left his uncle at the house. Harry was in a bad way when they found him and they had to hurry and get him to Madam Pomfrey."

"And they…hit…Harry? All the time?" Ginny nodded, and Hermione fisted her hands against her eyes, biting her lip in the attempt to keep the anguish for her friend at bay. "Why did no one know? How could I have not seen it? What kind of friend am I?" Hermione trailed off with a loud wail and buried her face within the fabric of her skirt.

"Please, Hermione…There's no use having those kinds of thoughts. No one really knew. Except for maybe Dumbledore…wouldn't put it past him…" she mumbled. "Harry never said anything to us, never indicated what went on except that his family didn't like him. He was very good at hiding the abuse. But now we know. And now we can help him and keep him safe, yeah? But I need to know whose side you're on, Hermione. Are you going to continue to listen to Ron, or are you going to see Harry and remind him you still love him? Because we all know he could use all the support he can get."

"Of course I'll stand by Harry!" Hermione looked outraged.

"And what about Ron?"

"He'll just have to deal with it." She raised her chin with a little sniff and Ginny grinned.

"Good. We should go visit Number Twelve first thing in the morning…"

"Oh, but Ron said…"

"No, Hermione! Seeing Harry should be our top priority. What's wrong with you?"

"All right, Gin. Calm down." Hermione scooped up Ginny's hand and gave it a friendly pat. "We'll go to Harry first thing in the morning." The amusement shown clearly in Hermione's eyes. She was used to Ginny's dramatics.

Ginny nodded, and then threw her hands behind her so that she was reclining slightly on the bed. "Are you going to tell Ron?"

"Unless he asks me, I'll not say anything to him about it. Not until after we've seen Harry."

"Good." Ginny nodded and they were comfortably silent for a few minutes, each lost in their own thoughts.

"Oh! You never told me about Malfoy. What happened?"
"Right. Thanks, I'd completely forgotten. Well it was Malfoy and Snape who rescued Harry."

"Of all the people who could have helped Harry, those two are the most unlikely!"

"Mmm hmm. Well, they must have just gotten in not long before we all arrived at Grimmauld, and then of course Ron and Malfoy had their spat before he ran off, dragging you with him. And that's when things started to get interesting."

"Well, go on!" Hermione was leaning forward, completely engrossed in her friend's story.

"It's not like what happened is such a big deal or anything, it's just that it was surprising."

"Ginny, you need to tell me what happened first."

"Oh, right. Fred, George, and I sat down in the kitchen with him and we talked. Weird doesn't even cover the feeling I got when we were all chatting civilly. Well for the most part. I suppose…” Ginny sighed and continued on in a singsong voice, "it wasn't very civil of me when I hexed his hair."

Hermione groaned. "You didn't."

"I did." Ginny started laughing. "He didn't discover it until right before we left, and when he did, Malfoy came running back into the kitchen in nothing but his boxers and socks!"

Now there are those, quite a number actually, who continue to think Hermione is nothing but a prude and wouldn't know a sexual innuendo if it hit her in the face. But they would be wrong. And so, as the picture of a Draco Malfoy clad only in boxers and socks sprung into her mind, so did the blush on her face appear. She may not like Malfoy, but she could identify a very nice body when she saw one. Clothed or not clothed.

"Oh, Merlin…"

"Yeah, my thoughts exactly." Ginny did have more to discuss with Hermione, about Dumbledore's past and present actions, and his subsequent treatment of Harry, as well as the lack of Death Eater sightings, but she thought that could wait until after they'd been to see Harry.

It seemed Hermione was thinking the same thing for a moment later she stood up and stretched. "We'll talk more about this tomorrow, Gin. It would probably be best to get some sleep now." Ginny nodded and stood as well to take the silencing spell and locking charm off the room. The moment she did so, the door burst opened to a raging red-faced Ron.

"What are you two doing? I've been banging on the door for ages!"

"No you haven't. Mum would have made you stop. What do you want? We were about to go to bed." Ginny turned away from him to rummage around in her dresser for her nightclothes, half listening to Hermione and Ron's bickering.

Despite the dreamless sleep draught, Harry was indeed dreaming. At least that's what he thought at the time, though later in the day, when he was decidedly awake, Harry would realize that the experience was much, much more than a dream. As it was, Harry slipped without effort into sleep, staring in confused wonderment at Malfoy even as his eyes closed. Panic washed through him when he started to fall, his fear of being sucked back into his own nightmares came crashing to the front of his mind. But his decent wasn't really of a dangerous speed and he forced himself to calm down when he realized this.
He felt like he was floating instead of just free falling and now that he could focus, he did in fact feel as light as a feather. He relaxed more when he realized this probably wasn't supposed to be a nightmare and twisted himself around so he could see where he was falling to. But all that presently surrounded him was a blurry light blue color of nothing, and he supposed he'd have to be patient and just ride this out.

Draco? It wasn't unreasonable to think that their connection was still intact, he told himself after feeling slightly embarrassed that he immediately wanted to search the other wizard out. But there was no answer, which left Harry feeling slightly disappointed until he felt something warm, soft, and reassuring brush his mind, and he was startled to realize he instinctively knew that he was feeling Draco as the blond slept on in his dreamless sleep.

Harry wondered how they were connected like this, and why the connection seemed to be so very strong. He'd heard of magic that could allow two people to be able to speak and feel telepathically, and if that pleasant touch caressing his mind was real, then it seemed that's exactly what he and Draco could do. He didn't know much else about the magic though, but he was sure he could find out something in Sirius' library. If Hermione were here, she could tell him more about the bonds. Harry's heart constricted painfully with that thought. He didn't think he'd ever be able to ask Hermione for help again. She'd probably just laugh in his face.

Harry looked down and found he was nearing the ground. It was a large open field, vivid green grass stretched for miles in all directions and he couldn't see where it ended. Directly below him was a single wooden bench. He was sure he'd seen ones like it in the park down the block from the Dursleys house. It was odd for it to just be sitting here in a large green field, but then again, this was a dream, and dreams were almost always cryptic.

He made a soft landing on the bench and sat down to wait for whatever was going to happen, not really worried that it would be something bad, but anxious for the point of all this to come about. A bright light overhead caused him to jerk his hand up to shield his eyes. He suspected the sun had just come out by the brightness and heat hitting him, and after a quick peak, confirmed his suspicions. He squeezed his eyes shut and waited for the bright spot temporarily burned into his retinas to disappear.

The blood in his veins suddenly ran cold when he heard a soft voice call out to him. "Harry!"

He pushed to his feet, but before he could think to do anything or know what he should be feeling at hearing his mother's voice again so soon after his nightmares where she had wished him never born, Lily Potter was once again standing in front of him, looking very real, along with his father. They were standing in front of him, holding hands. Their smiles were sad, but the look in their eyes made him want to cry. Real emotions were swimming behind James and Lily Potter's eyes, and he hadn't prepared for the onslaught of emotion he could see coming from his dead parents. Instead of loathing and disgust, he was looking into two pairs of eyes expressing a love and joy at seeing him. Lily came forward with a soft, almost hysterical laugh and threw her arms around Harry before he could even think to utter a word. "I can't believe it! We're here! You're here. It worked!" Lily cried, clutching her son to her chest. "And I can touch you. James, I'm holding our son again…” She broke off into more sobs.

Harry stood there, mouth slightly open in shock. He managed to bring an arm up to wrap around the crying woman and looked at his father. Harry wasn't sure if this James and Lily were only figments of the dream because his mum felt real enough. He could feel her tears dripping onto his shirt and smell the scent of her shampoo from the soft strands of hair floating by the wind across his face. Lily Potter smelt like lavender and lilacs. Tears stung his eyes and he asked the man standing before him,
"are you real?"

After he said this, Lily pulled back to look at him, "oh, Harry. Yes! We are real." Lily clasped her hands together and jumped on the balls of her feet, not unlike a child. Harry's smile was so wide; it felt like his face was cracking in some places for not being used in such a long time. "We've been trying for a while to visit you this way." Lily smiled at her son, and wrapped her arm around his, clear to both men that she wanted to have as much contact with her son for as long as she could.

"Harry," the taller man who looked almost exactly like Harry, put his hand on Harry's shoulder and squeezed, then he grinned. "Yeah, this is a dream, but we are real, in a way." He continued to smile, but the lines that appeared on his forehead told Harry that his father was unsure how to continue his line of thought.

"Er… Right, Dad. I understand. You're real here, but you're also still dead."

James grinned at his son and nodded. He took up the opposite side of his son from Lily, and threw an arm around his son's shoulders, and led them all back to the bench. Harry sat down once his mother did, and his father sat on the other side.

"How much time do you have here?" He asked quietly, while looking down at his hands, each one clasped in the hand of one of his parents. It was something he didn't want to know, but at the same time, he needed to know. Lily squeezed his hand and smiled softly at him.

"Not long but enough to say what we've come to say."

Harry tensed. An odd feeling crept over him. He was certain he was about to have one of those 'talks' parents generally have with their children when they've done something to disappoint said parents. It all felt so unreal.

"And what have you come to say?" Harry's voice turned hard, turning ice cold at the edges. He had been expecting this the moment he'd seen his parents. They were going to tell him how disappointed they were in him, and how much of a freak they thought he was. And because he didn't think he could stand to hear it, Harry attempted to stand up, but his father grabbed his arm to stop him.

"Son, don't be afraid of us." Harry closed his eyes, but he did sit down again. "We're not your nightmares, Harry. We've never been anything but proud of you." Harry looked up. James was smiling at him. When he turned to Lily, she was nodding her head.

"You've had a hard life, love, and you've had to make very hard decisions. Many of them unfair for a boy your age to have had to make."

"We can thank Dumbledore for that," James hissed.

"What do you mean?" Harry asked sharply, and grew more suspicious after catching his mum trying to shush his father.

"Oh, it's nothing. Slip of the tongue."

Staring hard at the ground, Harry clenched his fists so tight his nails were digging into his palms. "You're doing what they do. Information is always being kept from me. I didn't think you would ever do that."

"Harry, you listen to me." Lily threw an arm around his shoulders and pulled him in for a hug. "We're here because you need to know things. We would never keep anything from you. You will find out when you wake what your father was saying. But if we speak to you about it now, you may
think we've been sent by Voldemort to sway your side."

"We want you to do that by yourself, without our interference. But whatever decision you make, just know that you will never disappoint us, alright?"

"Yeah, Dad. All right." Though in truth, Harry had no idea what his father was talking about. He'd need to think about it later.

"Now, Harry. You've been under a lot of stress lately, what with Petunia and her horrible nasty beastly husband's treatment of you," she growled, fury filling her eyes. "Not to mention your row with Ronald Weasley…" Lily trailed off and stared at him knowingly. Harry's mouth went dry, his eyes shot back and forth between his mother and father in terror of what they knew.

"You know about the row?" his parents nodded. They both wore amused expressions, but Harry didn't seem to notice this. "You know the reason for it?"

"Yes, love. We know Ron has always been jealous of you and afraid of your powers and he turned against you once more when you told him of your sexual preference for wizards." Harry paled. He really didn't know what to expect his parents to say now.

"Harry, we have no problem with your liking blokes. That's just another aspect that makes you who you are."

"Yes, and besides," Lily started to giggle. "Your father would be a hypocrite if he did have a problem with you being gay."

"Lils!"

"What?" Harry rounded on his father. "You can't be gay! You're married to Mum!"

"No, Harry. I'm not gay," James said, and then he glared at Lily, who simply stuck her tongue out at him.

"Your father's bisexual. He experimented a lot at Hogwarts before we got together. I believe it was James, Sirius, and Lucius at the beginning of our Sixth year that took up the majority of attention from the students."

"Though don't get the wrong idea, Harry. Even at that time I still fancied your mother over anyone else."

"You've got to be kidding me? Lucius Malfoy? And Padfoot? Oh ewww! I'm getting mental pictures! Turn it off! That is definitely something I could have happily gone my whole life without knowing, Mum."

"I'm sorry, dear. But I thought it might help you gain some understanding. To let you see that nothing you can do would turn us against you, and we're not the only ones. You still have Sirius and Remus…" Harry shuddered when visions of Sirius, his father, and Lucius Malfoy doing things that would make even a dead man blush swam through his mind. "And despite being a Malfoy, you and that Draco boy seem to be getting on better and better now. Especially with the connection you two share. It grows stronger as your birthday draws near."

Harry would have asked exactly what connection was it that had him feeling Draco in his mind, but his father spoke first with a pained expression.

"Harry, did it have to be a Malfoy?"
"You're one to talk…" Lily mumbled under her breath. "Besides, he'll take great care of our son. You know he will."

"What? What about it being a Malfoy? What are you talking about?" before his father could answer, Lily reached over and cuffed her husband up side his head.

"They make the best…enemies, don't they?"

"That's not what you were going to say!"

"We're… we're really not supposed to say, Harry. It's supposed to be—Lily?" James looked at his wife. His eyes begging for her to take over explaining things before the foot lodged firmly in his mouth could slide down his throat.

Harry continued to stare back and forth, trying to absorb the innuendoes that had just been thrown at him. And the possibilities were…disgusting? Disturbing? Ridiculous? Well, whatever it was, he was going to shove all that away to the back of his mind and worry about it later. Right now he was going to enjoy the time he had with his parents. Harry was going to get to know as much about his parents as possible before this dream had to end. And at least now he knew his parents loved him, and that he was not a disappointment to them. And if he truly believed what they said, then he could do anything at all and they would always be proud of him. It was an insane intense feeling of belonging and freedom and he intended to savor it.

Hermione was dancing in a very nice dream with a man she could not see. She couldn't see what he looked like except for his long black hair and long graceful fingers that seemed to have been made with a purpose in mind. Just a moment…Ron doesn't have black hair. And his hands have never been that graceful…Oh well… She dreamily sighed and tried to get back the Mr. Talented Fingers, when she was interrupted by a penetrating voice. "Ginny! Hermione!"

Hermione opened her eyes, then immediately shut them due to the sunlight shining in through the window. "Ginny, you really need to invest in some nice curtains or shades like the rest of the world."

Ginny's answer was a groan and she burrowed deeper under her blankets until her bright red hair disappeared out of sight.

"Girls, up this minute!" Molly Weasley pounded on the door. "Bill and Remus have returned to headquarters! I want to see them and go check on Harry! Hurry, we're leaving in a few minutes!" Molly's footsteps could be heard moving away, and it only took a second for her words to sink into the girls' sleep fogged brains before they jumped out of bed and struggled to put on their clothes as quickly as possible.

"I hope Bill and Professor Lupin are alright. What do you think happened to keep them away for so long?"

"I'm sure they're fine, Ginny. There are loads of perfectly good reasons why they were held back. And I'm sure it wasn't something life threatening."

"But you don't know that for sure, Herm."

Ginny and Hermione ran from the room and down the stairs to the living room where Molly stood by the fireplace, wringing her hands, and leaning against Charlie for support. Ron came down the stairs then, and Charlie choked back a laugh when Ron walked right into a wall. Obviously he hadn't had enough time to completely wake up. He stopped beside Hermione and tried to grab her hand, but she pulled away and pretended to straighten her robes out.
"We're all here who's going? Good. We'll Floo there, while Charlie Apparates." There was the crack of Apparition as Charlie went, then one by one the Weasley's and Hermione Flooed to Number Twelve Grimmauld Place.

The moment they arrived, Molly sat her children and Hermione down at the kitchen table. "You lot wait here while I go and see how Bill and Remus are. You haven't had breakfast yet, so I'll be sure to cook you breakfast when I return."

"Okay, Mum," Ginny said, while looking pointedly at Hermione. All Ron did was snore with his head planted firmly on the tabletop, drooling from a wide-open mouth. Once Charlie and Molly made their way upstairs Ginny inched closer to Hermione.

"Now's the perfect time to go see Harry while everyone else is occupied with Bill and Professor Lupin."

Hermione quickly looked at Ron, but he was still sleeping, and she nodded. "Come on. Let's do it now before his stomach wakes him."

The girls made their way out of the kitchen, careful not to wake Ron, and headed up stairs. On the landing they saw Snape hovering in the space between Harry's room and the room they assumed was Lupin and Bill's. Sirius and Charlie stood just outside of that door talking quietly to each other.

"Let's go before we're noticed," Hermione whispered, and began to tiptoe towards the door.

The girls managed to duck into the room and quietly shut the door just moments before Severus turned. A gasp escaped Hermione when she caught sight of Harry. Instantly she was by his side, clutching his hands, whispering his name while tears fell down her cheeks.

"Oh, Harry. Harry…Harry…Harry, how could they do this to you? I'm so sorry I wasn't there for you when you needed help the most, but I can promise I will always be here for you from now on." Hermione kissed him on the forehead, and then turned to Ginny, who was over by Draco's bed.

"Ginny! Just what do you think you're doing?"

Ginny blushed, then straightened and dropped the sheets that were covering Draco's bottom half. "What? Don't act like you've never wanted to take a peek. I was just curious."

"No, I've never wanted to take a peek at Malfoy! Besides, he's gay. Even if there is something spectacular down there, we'll never know, and there is no use torturing yourself with the thought.” Hermione finished and turned back to Harry. Ginny gave Draco a sad look before walking over to Harry's bed.

"Hermione? You've given that a lot of thought…” Ginny sniggered when Hermione's face turned red.

"Honestly, Ginny. That's not it at all."

"Whatever." Ginny raised her hand to swat at the air, dismissing Hermione's defensive mood. "Besides, Harry is more likely to be the recipient of such a gift than any witch in the world." Ginny smiled fondly at Harry, brushing his dark bangs away from his closed eyes. Hermione looked up in surprise.

"What do you mean?"

Ginny looked up and her eyes darkened. "Oh, that's right. You and Ron hadn't been talking with him much near the end of last term. Harry realized he was gay because of his attraction to the blond ferret
over there. It was bad, Hermione. He was constantly pining after Malfoy. That depression? Most of that had to do with Draco."

Hermione's mouth dropped open to form an 'o'. Looking back and forth between the two young wizards, Ginny could see the wheels turning within the brunette's head and knew the moment all the clues and instances clicked together, and her mouth formed an even bigger 'o'.

"Yes," Ginny said with a nod. "And yesterday when we were talking I got the distinct impression that Malfoy may even return Harry's feelings. But we're not sure."

"Who's we?"

"Fred, George, and myself."

"How exactly did you get that impression?"

"Malfoy was acting strange. Like he was someone under the guise of the Polyjuice potion. He was almost being pleasant. Or as pleasant as a Malfoy can get at any rate. It doesn't seem like he hates Harry anymore, and he even used Harry's first name without so much as missing a beat."

"That is strange. But it could mean anything, Ginny. It doesn't mean that Malfoy has any feelings besides animosity towards Harry."

"I think you're wrong, but I suppose it would be prudent to wait and see."

"Why, Ginny! I think that's the most responsible and intelligent thing I've ever heard you say." Hermione said, and then laughed when Ginny shot a hex her way.

"Shut it, you!"

"Hermione? Ginny?" The girls gasped and spun towards the door as it was pushed open to reveal Ron Weasley. His face darkened the moment he saw Harry and Draco, and the girls prepared themselves for a very unpleasant row they knew was inevitable.

"What are you doing in here with them? Hermione?" Ron made his way over to Hermione and ignored Harry's presence.

"I'm here to visit Harry. He's been badly hurt."

"So? He doesn't need us to look out for him. He doesn't need anyone. He said so himself. You heard him, Hermione."

"Yes, well..."

"Harry only said that because you promised no one would support him. You told him our entire family hated him! He was angry and retaliated with his own words! You're just lucky it was only words he used to spar with you!" Ginny yelled to her brother's face.

"What are you on about?"

"You know exactly what I'm talking about!"

"Harry has more power in his little pinky then you do in your whole body, Ronald," Hermione solemnly told him. "You must have noticed after all these years of being around him. After second year, I could always feel it pulsing away around him like a heartbeat. He will most likely be one of the most powerful wizards alive when his birthday passes."
"Mione…" Ron's eyes narrowed on his girlfriend and she began to chew her bottom lip.

"And that's why you've turned your back on him, isn't it?" Ginny said, moving to stand in front of Ron's view of Malfoy's bed, as she had just seen silver eyes groggily opening.

Draco felt like he was lying on the bottom of a riverbed, his body covered in rocks to keep him anchored down, but leaving his limbs free to float along with the water current. And as all the thoughts and events of the last two days crashed into him at once, he felt so overwhelmed that he was sure he was drowning. As the panic started to set in, the echo of loud voices drifted in to his half conscious mind and he grasped onto the voices like a lifeline. He lay still, letting the voices draw him out of sleep and to his right senses. It was odd, the way he was feeling. The physical part of him felt the effects of his healing ability, the aches and fatigue, but his mental state did not match his physical state. His thoughts were light, content; and excitement coursed through him in unbelieving waves.

Draco lay still and listened as the voices grew louder as he pushed the sleep completely out of his mind. It was then he noticed those exuberant feelings weren't coming from him at all. Which made sense because Draco really had nothing to be so happy about. Except for some strange reason, when he realized this feeling was coming from Harry, this did please him somehow. He could feel Harry's presence in a corner of his mind. Well, that was one mystery solved, and another brought to light, though at the moment, he felt no need to wonder why he and Harry could feel each other that way. He would figure it out later, but right now he was going to keep his eyes closed, ears open, and enjoy the show the Gryffindors were putting on.

"W-What?" the voice stuttered pathetically. Ah, that was the Weasel's voice. Typical. No matter what he said or did, Weasley always managed to make a bumbling idiot out of himself.

"You couldn't stand it, and when Harry was told that he would be acquiring his full magical abilities when he reached the age of seventeen, you decided you couldn't take it anymore. Isn't that right, Ron? You started spreading the rumor among the Gryffindors that Harry was losing his mind and would eventually end up the next Dark Lord!" Ginny ranted. "Of course people listened to you because everyone knows Ron Weasley is Harry Potter's best friend. And who better to know what Harry was doing and thinking than his best friend. And so everyone has started to believe you."

What? Draco thought furiously. Weasley was trying to turn everyone against Harry by saying the-boy-who-lived would eventually turn into a Dark Lord. If it had been anyone but Weasley, Draco would have been proud to say that that was a very Slytherin tactic. But this was Weasel and he was using it against Harry.

"I didn't know you were the one to start that rumor, Ron." Hermione's voice trembled again. "You told me you didn't know who started it. Only that it was possibly true."

"What does it matter, anyway? He's going to gain all that power and use it against all of us one day. I'm just glad I saw the error of my ways before I got caught up in his Dark Arts shit."

_The error of his ways?_ Draco's teeth were clenched so tightly together that his jaw started to hurt. To think that Harry had actually wasted his time and loyalties on this red-haired piece of dragon dung.

"You know what? I'm finished talking about this. Come on, Hermione. I want to go see how Bill is."

"No, Ron. I'm visiting with Harry right now. I'll come see Bill in a little bit." To Draco it sounded like Granger had finally found her backbone when it came to her boyfriend. "I'm sorry, Ron, but Harry needs me. And I need to be here for him when he wakes up."
"W-What?"

Draco mentally rolled his eyes. Honestly, Weasel was brainless. Surely he had to have more words in his vocabulary then that.

"As of today, I will be moving to Grimmauld Place; that is, of course, if it's alright with Sirius. And since you want nothing to do with Harry, and because I will be spending most of my time with him when he wakes up…." Draco frowned at this, not sure why this bothered him. "We'll hardly have the time to see each other, will we?"

"Are you breaking up with me?" Ron's face had gone purple with embarrassment and anger.

"Yes, Ron. That's exactly what she's saying," Ginny interrupted, impatient for the conversation to be over with. She knew Malfoy was awake and listening, and she wanted to hold her own little discussion with the blond Slytherin.

"Ginny, please," Hermione begged, knowing the youngest Weasley would only anger Ron further then was needed.

"Sure, right. Sorry. I'll just go stand over there." She pointed off in a vague direction, but headed straight for Draco's bed. Ron didn't notice where his sister was headed, as he was too busy glaring at the unconscious Harry.

"Spst! Malfoy?"

"Go away, Weaslette. I'm perfectly content to lay here silently in a false sleep, listening to the dramatics of you Gryffindors," Draco murmured lowly under his breath, but Ginny was able to hear because she stood directly beside his head. Ginny rolled her eyes and placed a hand on her cocked hip.

"You helped Harry? Out of his coma?" she whispered, keeping half her attention on her squabbling brother and friend, and the other on Malfoy. He'd not moved really one inch since she'd seen him open and close his eyes before, so she couldn't really tell what he was thinking. It would have been nice to get an expressive reaction from him, but she only managed to feel stupid for talking to a sleeping person.

"Perhaps I helped him a bit, but Potter found his own way out. Though I can't see how, as he is a first class idiot. He had to have wanted to leave, and he obviously did."

"Yes, but…if he hadn't planned on staying within his mind, he wouldn't have made himself go into that coma in the first place." She grinned at him then, and made sure her tone expressed that grin to its fullest. "Something made him want to leave, Malfoy. I wonder what that could have been, hmm? Have any ideas?"

"No I do not, and I could care less really." Draco promptly turned over until his back was to the Gryffindors, and he buried his face in the pillow. Granger and the Weasel's voices were getting louder, building up on the headache throbbing just behind his eyes.

SLAP!

Both he and Ginny twisted their heads around to stare at the couple. Hermione stood there, hand raised half way from Weasley's face, where there was a stark white handprint on his cheek surrounded by all that angry red. Draco glanced at Granger, whose chest was heaving and tears fell freely from her eyes, and was staring at Weasley with incomprehensible horror while Ron was gripping his wand tightly in his hand, but he didn't look like he was about to use it on Granger.
"How dare you try and cheapen my relationship with Harry! For you to even suggest such a thing… I don't know if I can forgive you for that."

What did he say? What did he say? Draco wished desperately to know what it was, so that he could use it to make the git angry later on. Damn you Weaslette for talking too much!

"This is all Potter's fault. I knew he was going to take you from me," Ron said darkly.

Draco rolled his eyes. Of course Weasel would blame Harry. Lately, he noticed a lot of people blamed Harry for many things. Ron suddenly moved, startling Draco from his thoughts.

Ron was raising his wand to point at Harry's face with a curse on the tip of his tongue. He was furious. How could Harry do this to him? Again and again, he was always taking what Ron wanted. Always. It wasn't right. Every time Harry was injured, even in the slightest bit, he was always getting the attention, having everyone standing behind him, pampering him. Even when he wasn't laid up in a bed somewhere, or was on some mad adventure his insane mind tended to create, Harry was always stealing Ron's glory. Everything he'd ever wanted, but would never have. The anger and bitterness coiled in the pit of his stomach like poison. He felt it rise up into his chest, to his arm, through his fingers and into his wand. Ron opened his mouth to curse Harry, but stopped to sift through his memory to find the curse that would prove to be the most painful.

Ron's hesitation saved his former best friend by giving Draco time to grab his wand from under the pillow, and before Draco knew what was happening he pointed at Ron,

"Expelliarmus!" Ron flew backwards with a grunt, his intent on cursing Harry forgotten. "Accio wand." Ron's wand flew into Draco's waiting hand, and the blond gracefully removed himself from bed and stalked towards the dazed Weasel.

"Tsk tsk." Stopping in front of Weasley, Draco shook his head. "To try and curse an injured and unconscious person is low, Weasley." He spoke with an amused tone like he was explaining something to an absentminded little boy. "It's worse than firing at somebody's back, and I should know as I'm quite fond of attacking people from behind."

The look on Weasley's face told him the freckled faced redhead would like to respond with a remark meant to scathe, but Draco was certain the words would have only caused him amusement. He stared at Ron, and his eyes had never been so cold, yet at the same time filled with a torrent of burning anger. And under such blackness, Ron was afraid to open his mouth. Then Draco crouched in front of Weasley until they were eye to eye and his grin was feral.

"If you ever try and lay a hand on Harry again, I will curse you with your own wand and then promptly shove it up your arse and break off the tip. I can't be accountable for my actions if you so much as look at him the wrong way. Harry is under my protection. I will allow no one but myself to hurt him. Is that understood, Weasley?"

"Push off, Malfoy!" Ron tried pushing Malfoy aside, but the blond grabbed Ron's robes and pulled him to his feet. It didn't matter to Draco if Weasley was a couple of inches taller than him. As far as he was concerned, Ronald Weasley was no bigger than a slug. With his rage contained behind a mask of gleeful vindictiveness, Draco pulled back his arm and smiled smugly when his fist contacted with Weasley's nose, cracking the cartilage. Ron fell back with a cry, his nose clutched in his hands while blood poured forth and past his fingers. He knelt again and whispered close to Weasley's ear.

"Cause any problems for Harry and I'll kill you. Dumbledore and the rest of these fools trust me, so I'll get away with it. You don't trust me. You know I'm a Dark wizard, therefore you know I will do as I promise. I know simple curses that will kill you in the most painful of ways. Do you
Ron stood and pushed past Draco. He wiped the blood off his face with his sleeve, but only managed to create a bigger mess since his nose was still bleeding. "Give me my wand, Malfoy."

"No, I don't think I will. I think I'll wait to give it to one of the professors when I see them. It's obvious you can't be trusted with it."

Ron fisted his hands and Draco raised an eyebrow. He knew Weasley was used to using his fists, but he wondered if he would do it now, and with Weaslette and Granger standing close by watching everything in silent apprehension.

"Malfoy, if you don't give it back, I swear I'm going to…"

"And what, pray tell, are you going to do? And why, Mr. Weasley?" Everyone's attention snapped to the door as Severus swooped into the room. He stopped just before Ron, towering over the boy's head, glaring daggers at him. "I'm very interested in hearing what's gone on here."

"He's stolen my wand, Professor Snape!"

Draco hid a grin when Severus' eyebrow shot up. "Perhaps you can explain, Mr. Malfoy?"

"Quite simple really. Weasley tried to attack Potter. I intervened just in time to stop his curse, and then I disarmed him."

The look on Severus' face suggested Yule had come early that year, though anyone who knew Severus knew very well that the man did not celebrate Yule unless forced; indeed, Severus rarely celebrated anything. Draco handed Ron's wand to him with a very self-satisfied smirk.

"Hmm, let me see." Severus tapped a finger against his chin as he turned thoughts over in his head. "Ten points from Gryffindor for disturbing the peace and another fifty points for attempting to attack a fellow student. A student who is severely injured and unconscious… Have you no shame, Mr. Weasley?"

"What? You're not serious! This isn't Hogwarts, Professor. You can't take points off here."

"Another twenty-five points from Gryffindor for failing to keep your mouth shut! I can assure you, Mr. Weasley. I do have the right to take points away, and by the time the Welcoming Feast starts next term, Gryffindor will have negative eighty-five points. Now, I'll be keeping your wand with me until your mother is ready to take you home. You will return to the kitchen now and remain there until you leave. Is this understood, Mr. Weasley?"

Weasley didn't have time to answer because the professor was already herding Ron towards the door and gave the teen a hard push to get him past the doorway. Ginny and Hermione were still very shocked about what had just happened, but they were well enough to fear the Potions Master would make them leave as well. There was still some time with Harry they wanted. Surprisingly, Snape was smirking when he turned back to them.

"Who is responsible for the handprint upon Mr. Weasley's cheek?"

Hermione stiffened and turned the lovely shade of cherries. She slowly raised her hand. "It was me, sir."

Severus' eyes widened and the corners of his mouth twitched up. Draco watched the interaction while rubbing a hand over his cheek. The incident reminded Draco of his own experience with
Granger's hand, and he knew how painful Weasley's face must be, and that cheered him up a little.

"I'd say it was a long time in coming. I suppose this merits… ten points to Gryffindor. And the broken nose?"

"Did you like my art work, Professor Snape? I took great pleasure in creating it," Draco drawled, looking very smug.

Severus continued to smirk. "Twenty points to Slytherin."

The only thing Professor Snape was known to be predictable about was the exchange of house points, which was why Ginny and Hermione remained silent, even though they found it quite unfair Slytherin had gotten more points than Gryffindor, and none taken away at all.

"How do you feel? You should still be in bed resting. Do you wish me to clear the room for you, Mr. Malfoy?" Severus inquired. Hermione and Ginny held their breaths, though they knew that wasn't going to help, as they were sure Malfoy would make them leave. But Malfoy was shaking his head.

"Weasley was the only problem. Thank You, Professor." A small gasp escaped Ginny and her gaze swiveled to Draco in astonishment.

Severus eyed the three remaining Gryffindors and then nodded. "Fine then. I shall return later in the afternoon. Pomfrey will be in to see you in a moment. Draco, return to bed."

"Please, sir?" Hermione came forward. "Can you tell us how Harry is? Will he wake soon?"

"Do I look like a mediwizard, Miss Granger?"

"No sir. I just thought…"

"Why are we not surprised by this?" Severus hissed at her, his black eyes boring into her brown ones. He would have left without a word after that, but her lips were trembling, and she stared forlornly at her toes. "Yes, Potter will live, and he'll most likely awaken by this evening, after which I give him an hour before he's jumping around trying to get us all into trouble again. Now, if that is all…" Severus slid Ronald Weasley's wand into a pocket within his robes and departed from the room. He was slightly confused with himself as to why he answered the Granger girl. But it seemed the thing to do in order to keep that sad look off her face, and to stop that lip from trembling, because to be frank, he'd been far too focused on those lips.

Once Severus was gone Draco huffed and turned towards Harry's bed. There was a sneer forming on his face for the sake of Weaslette and Granger, so that maybe they would push off as well, but today just wasn't his day. In moments, his arms were full of a fuzzy haired Gryffindor clutching at his robes and sobbing her thanks against his chest for saving her best friend.

"Professor Snape!" Draco whined, looking hopefully at the door, expecting to see his godfather appear to save him from over emotional witches. But Severus didn't emerge, so he was stuck trying to pry the muggle born off him.

"Merlin, Malfoy! Thank you. Thank you so much for saving Harry. I can't believe I'm saying thanks to you, but you deserve it."

"Weaslette! Do something about this!"

"What do you want me to do, Malfoy?" Ginny answered back happily, enjoying the obvious discomfort of the Slytherin. "You did save Harry. There's no use trying to deny it to us. We did see
"it, after all."

"Just get her off!"

"Sorry, Malfoy." Hermione sniffed and stepped back, but she still had a smile on her face for him, and though he didn't like her, he had to appreciate the situation and the civility of it, and allowed a slight grin in return for her. And again, the witches gasped at his behavior.

Draco rolled his eyes. "Yes, well…" he sniffed, moving back to his bed. "At least you've finally shown some real intellect, Granger, and finally dumped that ingrate."

"Shut it, you git!" Hermione replied with none of the usual bite to her words when conversing with Malfoy. In fact, she sounded amused. It really should have bothered Draco that he didn't mind speaking with Granger or that he could no longer think of her as less of a witch because she was a muggleborn. He turned and glared at Harry. And why can't I even say the m word in my head anymore? I'm sure this entire situation is your fault, Potter! I know it is. Draco caught sight of movement out of the corner of his eye and stared in frozen horror as both witches approached his bed. Draco thought their smiles were especially terrifying.

"Hermione, chairs?"

"Oh, yes. Just a moment." Hermione raised her wand and transfigured two chairs from a quill and a parchment she had stashed away within her robes. Both girls sat and fixed him with serious expressions.

"Now Draco…Can I call you Draco? I'm going to call you Draco." Ginny leaned forward. "Draco, we want to know what's going on around here and I know you have some answers. If you would kindly spill the Bertie Bott's Every Flavored Beans, that would be grand."

"You've lost your minds, haven't you?" Draco asked seriously.

"Yes." Hermione nodded to him, grinning.

"And apparently," Ginny flashed him another evil grin. "So have you."
They were in a garden now. The bright sun overhead illuminated every inch of the small paradise, chasing every shadow and imperfection away with the darkness; just as being with his parents now was doing to his heart and soul. Harry felt mostly cleansed of his troubles, his agitation, and all the angst presently in his life, and for this moment sitting amongst the grove of fruit trees and flower beds, side by side with his parents, he allowed himself to feel completely at ease, letting the peace of that feeling cocoon him. And with this peace came a new resolve.

"Mum, Dad, I have something to tell you."

"Go on then, Harry. We're listening."

"Yes, well…this is kind of hard to say to you…"

"Whatever it is, sweetheart, we will listen and try to understand. There's no reason to fear our reactions." His mum smiled at him while patting his hand. Harry turned his hand over so that their fingers laced together. Feeling her palm against his gave him an abundance of courage.

"Right, um…Well to get right to it, I can't be Dumbledore's puppet any longer. I don't like the way he does things or the way he treats his own people for the sake of the Greater Good. And to be honest, I'm not completely for the Greater Good. The Wizarding World needs to be protected and this won't happen if Dumbledore gets his way. Also, I feel that I'm not… I'm not exactly Light. I'm really sorry."

Lily and James shared a knowing look over his head before turning back to him. James dropped a hand onto his son's hunched shoulder. "Harry, there's no need for you to apologize. Have you forgotten that we've been watching over you, and that we see what Dumbledore has done?" he asked, and then went on without waiting for his son to answer. "Now that we're no longer living, we see more now than ever. And all we want is for you to be yourself and think for yourself. Don't be what Dumbledore wants you to be for the sake of the Greater Good. I'm very proud to know that you came to this decision on your own.

"And as for you not being exactly Light… I think that has something to do with your magical Inheritance, though we don't know what's going to happen. That's something we can't see yet. And Harry? We're dead. We are not going to judge you. All we want now is for you to be happy and live your own life."

Harry's eyes were shining as he looked at his father. "Really?" James nodded.

"Yes, you most certainly make the name Potter proud," Lily said gently squeezing his hand. Harry had to fight hard to keep himself from dissolving into tears and cleared his throat before speaking again.

"I have no idea what to say."

"That's alright. We understand." James suddenly looked up into the sky and frowned. "Lily, it's
almost time."

Harry winced when his mother squeezed his hand so hard he thought it might break. Who knew a dead woman could be so strong? He felt a hand caress his cheek and looked over to find his mother with tears in her eyes, but she was smiling at him.

"Mum, please don't cry," he pleaded with her; though the thought of his parents leaving him again made his own eyes water and he tried to blink the tears away. He gathered her close in his arms and ran his hand reverently over her beautiful amber hair. "I'm so happy I got to see you."

"Harry, before we go there is something important I need you to do for me," Lily said to him, her tone suddenly very serious.

"Anything, Mum. You only need to ask." He was worried because his mother looked really tense. But then she sighed in contentment and was happily snuggled in between her son and husband when James put an arm around her in support. "What is it?"

"Harry love, sometime after you wake, Severus will come to have a very important discussion with you." Harry shot a glance at his father to find the older man with a sneer on his face when Snape's name was mentioned. "I only ask that you give him a chance and listen to what he has to say, and believe your father and I when we say that Severus is telling you the truth."

"The truth about what?"

"I dare say you'll soon find out. Now, there's also something else, something that has to do with my family…"

"Do we really need to tell him this, Lils?" James murmured, and received an angry glare from his wife. After that, his father wisely kept his mouth shut, though it was obvious to Harry that his father didn't like what he was about to be told.

"What? It can't be that bad… Or wait, maybe I can guess?"

"You could try, but you'll not guess it in a million years."

"Our family is actually related to Slytherin?" Harry started to laugh, but quickly shut his mouth with a snap when he caught sight of the looks on his parents' faces. "That's not it, is it? You can't be serious!"

"Ha ha! No, Harry, but good guess," James said, chuckling. "Actually, the Potters are descendents of Gryffindor. Far stretched descendents but descendents none the less."

Harry stared at his father blankly for a good three minutes with his father staring straight-faced right back, only blinking every so often, before Harry finally shook his head in amusement. "Oh very funny. You almost had me there for a minute."

"James speaks the truth, love. You do have Gryffindor's blood in you."

"Oh." Really, what else was there for him to say? I mean, just… really?

"Eloquent as always, son," James started to chuckle at the look on his son's face.

"Anyway, what your mother is getting at is that you are actually a pure blooded wizard."

"But Mum's a muggleborn, aren't you?"
"No dear, I was adopted as it turned out. When we... well when we died and moved on I was met by my biological mother. I was more than a little shocked, I must tell you."

"Oh, um...ok. Don't see why you'd have to be nervous to tell me that. I didn't care that you were a muggleborn or that I was a half-blood, so it really doesn't make much difference if I'm a pureblood, except now I have something to shove in Draco's face..." he trailed off with a dreamy smile on his face.

"Oh! Isn't it wonderful, James? Our baby is in love!"

"WHAT? No I'm really not. Where did that come from?"

"Like I said before, why did it have to be a Malfoy?"

"As if he had a choice," Lily whispered to herself before giggling. "Fate is Fate."

"But I'm not in love with anybody," Harry protested weakly, though he knew his parents wouldn't believe him by the looks on their faces. Well I'm not!

"Malfoys," James muttered.

"James... you know that Lucius' son isn't that bad, and if Lucius would open his eyes a little and think logically about certain things, then he wouldn't be so bad either."

"I don't want to speak about Lucius Malfoy," James spat vehemently. "After what he did to Sirius-" he cut off and pressed his lips together, looking altogether furious. Harry wondered what exactly Malfoy had done to Sirius.

"What did he do?"

James shook his head forcibly and looked away. Lily squeezed Harry's hand. She looked at her husband. "Malfoy had no choice."

"Whatever, Lils. I don't want to talk about that wizard."

Harry looked back and forth between his parents and shook his head. "This is the weirdest conversation I've ever had. Scratch that, this entire situation is weird."

"You're right about that. Now," Lily smiled, "back to what I need to tell you."

"There's more?" Harry wasn't sure he wanted the conversation to go on.

"Yes. Now don't freak out," Oh, god! Harry thought, "but my biological mother's maiden name was Prince and I have a biological brother who is still alive."

There was a moment of silence where Harry registered what was said. "Wait, so you're telling me I'm not related to the Dursleys and that I have a living relative somewhere? This is fantastic! I can't wait to tell Siri—Did you say Prince?" Harry's face paled, and by the way his father's lips were stretched into a thin line, he knew his thoughts on that name were correct. Harry slowly raised himself to his feet and looked off towards the setting sun. "Are you trying to tell me that that snarky, slimy, greasy bastard IS MY UNCLE?" he really hadn't meant to yell that last part out, but he really couldn't help it. His father snorted as his description of Severus Snape.

"Harry, language! Watch how you speak about your uncle."

"But, Mum," Harry whined as he sank to his knees beside her, "Snape hates me! I'm sure he and
Uncle Vernon are co presidents of the I Hate Harry Potter club."

"That fat bastard is not your uncle, Harry!" Lily's voice rose shrilly.

"Lily, language!" James mocked before turning to Harry. "I'm not happy about it either son, but it is the truth. Severus Snape is your uncle and you need to tell him."

"No way! He'll want to kill me! Besides, he wouldn't believe me anyway."

"That's why you're going to tell him about the journal our mother hid away before she died. She hid it under the first stepping-stone out of the back door at his old childhood home. Once he reads that, he'll have no choice but to believe. You really should give him a chance, both of you. He was a good friend and I wished it would have remained that way."

"It's my fault the relationship you both had ended. I'm sorry about that."

"Dad, I've always wanted to ask…"

"Why I was such a bastard to him?" Harry nodded. "Everything he told you about me is true I guess. I was a spoiled pampered immature boy who didn't know any better. I thought he was trying to take Lily away from me, even before we started seeing each other, not to mention the fact that he was using the Dark Arts for dark purposes."

"Isn't that what the Dark Arts are for?"

"There are other uses. I'm sure Snape wouldn't mind explaining it to you."

"Severus Snape is my uncle…did I mention how strange this all is?"

"Harry, one more thing. If he believes you and reads the journal, Severus is going to have a hard time coming to terms with this information. He is a hard man, but despite that, his heart is very fragile." Harry and James both snorted at this, and earned themselves a glare. "And this will take some time for him to come to terms with. It will be very hard for him, especially after what transpired the last time we spoke. I want you to promise me you'll give the wizard a chance, Harry."

Harry gritted his teeth, knowing perfectly well how Severus Snape was going to take this. Still… he was his uncle. He was family by blood. "I promise, Mum. But I'm telling you right now, he'll not want to be anywhere near me. Not only am I James Potter's son, but I'm also a Gryffindor, and you know how much he hates Gryffindors."

"Not all, apparently. He seems to have a thing for intelligent Gryffindor witches."

"James!" hissed Lily. James snickered. "We're giving too much away!"

James shrugged. "Not really. One more thing, Harry," he went on before Lily got started. "You'll be an adult soon, and not only will you receive your magical Inheritance, but you'll also receive your family inheritance. You are the sole Potter heir, and as you may or may not know, our family is very wealthy. The vault you have now is nothing compared to what you're going to get come your birthday. Among many other things, you'll receive the deeds and titles to all Potter estates…"

"Estates? As in plural?" Harry squeaked.

"Yes, and I'm giving you my permission to do with them what you will. Many of the homes are very well hidden and warded, and would be very useful if you needed a place to keep away from Dumbledore and the corrupt Ministry, and allow you to work on your ambitions." James leaned
forward and gave him a conspiring wink, which took Harry back a bit.

"You know about the Sorting Hat wanting to put me in Slytherin?"

"Oh yes. Can't really say I was surprised as it tried to do the same to me."

"Really?"

"Yep, but I chose Gryffindor for reasons different from you. And despite what people think, the Slytherins are worthy allies when they want to be, and in most cases are more loyal than even Gryffindors. I'm sure your Draco could tell you that…"

"He's not my Draco! I don't know why you think I'm in love with him."

"Right, kiddo. Whatever you say. But just remember, we've been watching you. Watched you last year at school…” James smiled indulgently at his stubborn heir and ruffled Harry's thick black hair when his son turned away to hide a telling blush. Then he shrugged when Harry turned back with an unbelieving stare and stood, helping his wife up as well.

When Harry was standing he suddenly found himself in a crushing hug with his mom.

"Oh Harry, I can't tell you how much this time we've had with you means to us."

"Will this happen again? Can't I see you like this again somehow? It's going to hurt too much, Mum. We haven't had enough time." Harry's arms tightened around her and he bent his head so that it was buried in her neck. He didn't bother to check his tears and let them fall. "I don't think I can let you go."

"You don't have to let us go. We're always watching and we'll always be here for you, even if you can't see us."

Harry didn't move or reply to that; just continued to hold onto his mother as they both cried. He heard his father chuckle and then felt his father's form press against him from behind, while his arms encircled both his son and wife.

"If I hadn't known about your sexual preference before, I would definitely have guessed you were gay by the way you two are carrying on right now. It's not the end of the world." But even as he said this, to try and lighten the mood, Harry heard how his father's voice trembled, and his father was hugging back just as tightly as Harry and Lily.

"I don't want to be alone again. I love you both so much. It's not fair that you have to go. Don't leave me alone, please," he begged in choked sobs.

"Harry, look at me." He turned around to look at his father and wiped the tears away from his eyes. James put his hands on Harry's shoulders and squeezed gently. "We love you too, and we always will. You'll not be alone, I promise. You'll see as soon as you wake up. And it's time to open your eyes, all right. It's time to wake up now."

His father's voice started to sound distant, and the pressure of his hands on Harry's shoulders began to lessen even though they were still firmly placed there.

"No! I'm not ready to go back."

"It'll be alright, love." He felt his mum place a kiss on his cheek, which felt like the soft flutter of butterfly wings. She was fading too, and Harry's tears continued to fall. "It's time to wake up now.
Your friends need you, just like you need them. Don't worry; everything will work out fine, Harry. You need to wake up now…"

"I don't want to!"

The surroundings around him were quickly fading away, just as his parents, until he could only make out their eyes, which were burning brightly with their love for him. He heard his mum's laughter.

"He's so stubborn, your son," Lily laughed tearfully. "Wake up now, love. You need to open your eyes."

"No."

James and Lily Potter were completely gone now. Still he raised a hand to where they had been standing but of course he felt nothing. Harry closed his eyes and collapsed to the ground in a trembling wave of anguish and he rocked there with his knees to his chest, having no idea how much time passed.

"Come on, Harry. Open your eyes." A soft voice tried to coax him out of despair. And then a much louder voice filled with impatience startled him. "Wake up idiot Gryffindor!"

Harry's eyes flew open again when he recognized the voice as Draco's and some of his sorrow did fade away. He wanted Draco. He needed him. It was that same feeling. The same feeling he'd had last year, watching Draco at school. The overwhelming yearning for the blond. Only now, he could talk to Draco; look him straight in the eye. He had a chance with the blond. Draco had made that much obvious when they'd been in his mind. Harry pulled in a calming breath and stood up. And then he allowed himself to let go of his unconsciousness.

By dinner time that night, Number Twelve had settled down to a relative peaceful quiet. Bill and Remus had been tended to, fortunately their wounds weren't too critical, and it was surprising that they hadn't been attacked by Death Eaters or any other of Voldemort's forces; instead they'd been in a bizarre boating accident on their way to some obscure cave off the coast of France. Everyone within the Order wondered why they'd been on a boat in the first place. Dumbledore had explained it was necessary to arrive at the cave by muggle means, which really did nothing to satisfy the questions or put any minds at ease as to what Dumbledore was up to.

Madam Pomfrey came and went, checking up on her patients, and gave Draco a clean bill of health and permission to leave the room whenever he wanted just as long as he returned to a bed whenever he felt fatigued. To her surprise, Draco declined in leaving and remained with Harry and the two Gryffindor witches. And if either of the girls suspected that Draco was reluctant to leave the room and his bed because he wanted to stay where Harry was, they didn't say anything about it.

Severus returned at one point for a visit and to drop off potions for Harry, and for a moment he could only stand in the doorway shocked to see his godson willingly conversing with the two witches, and one a muggleborn witch at that. Just before he left, Severus had given Draco a hard knowing stare when Draco said he wanted to remain at Grimmauld Place for the time being. The girls burst out into giggles after that. They had obviously used up all their restraint.

Hermione and Ginny spent most of the day keeping Draco company and all three of them were surprised at how easy it was for them to get along when they let go of House rivalry, especially for Draco. He found the Weaslette's fiery attitude immensely entertaining, because unlike her idiot brother, Ginny had a sense of humor and she could also stand toe to toe with him when it came to shooting out verbal barbs. And Granger reminded him way too much of Pansy, except the
Gryffindor was a tad bit more anal about schoolwork. Though that didn't bother Draco, as he was the same way when it came to his studies, and he and Granger spent much of the time conversing about Potions, Arithmancy, and Ancient Runes. And he was thankful that they kept his mind away from worrying too much about Harry and wondering when he would wake up.

For Harry's sake, Hermione was glad to find she and Draco had much in common, and she very much enjoyed the debates they had on certain subjects. After hanging around Ron and Harry for so long, it was a relief to be able to speak to someone who could understand and follow her every word without her having to explain every little thing she was trying to say. And Ginny found Draco had a wicked sense of humor, and was way too fun to tease about things…mainly she teased him about Harry. It was worth it every time when she mentioned Harry and his eyes would immediately move to rest on Harry just before his pale face blushed. Who knew Draco could blush so much. At first he had been adamant about them not using his first name, and he even went so far as to threaten them with bodily harm, but Gryffindor's were a stubborn lot apparently because they wouldn't relent, and as the time passed he gave up and reluctantly started calling them by their first names after their insistence, though he did have trouble the first few times he tried addressing them as Ginny and Hermione. He'd wondered briefly about how his father would react if he could see his son now. But then he just shrugged. Lucius wasn't here so it really didn't matter. His father hadn't been with him in a very long time.

"You actually brewed the Polyjuice Potion in our second year? Are you serious?"

"Quite serious."

"That potion is N.E.W.T level."

"I know. We brewed it in the girls' bathroom. The one Moaning Myrtle haunts."

"And why would you make that potion? Certainly not for extra credit. Professor Snape would never allow that." Draco was already interested, but when Hermione looked away and her face resembled that of a tomato, he leaned forward eagerly, his interest shooting through the roof. "This should be good. What is it?"

"Well if you promise not to get too mad. I mean it was our second year after all."

"Just get on with it already, Granger."

"Alright, alright. No need to get snippy with me, Draco Malfoy!" He gasped and sat back, momentarily shocked. She'd sounded just like Pansy. "Well as you recall, that was the year the Chamber of Secrets was opened…oh, I'm sorry, Ginny! I wasn't thinking…" But Ginny was waving her hand.

"Like you said, it was your second year, my first. And Harry helped me get over it. You know it was just another thing that we had in common, being affected by You-Know-Who directly…"

"Okay, on with the story, please."

"Geez, Draco. Are you always this impatient, or is it because you're just so worried about Harry, hmm?"

"Whatever…" but he did blush, much to Ginny's pleasure and his disgust. "Just get on with it."

"Well anyway, we wanted to find out who the heir of Slytherin was, and well, we kind of thought it was you."
"Me? Well… Yes, I guess I can see where you'd get that." His nose raised a little and he smirked.

"And that's why we needed the potion. We were going to take the potion and sneak into Slytherin House. Harry and Ron drugged a couple of cupcakes for Crabbe and Goyle, stole some of their hair and uniforms, then transformed into them and went to interrogate you. Of course you told them you had no idea who the heir of Slytherin was… And that's the end of the Polyjuice Potion story. Nothing else happened, nothing at all."

"Hold on, what about you? Did you not take the potion? You did the brewing after all. I don't see Harry and Weasley brewing the potion on their own or even with help for that matter."

"That's true, they weren't very much help."

"You are stalling, Granger. Didn't you take the potion?"

"Well of course I did! I made it didn't I? Of course I'd want personal experience with taking the potion."

"What happened then? What part did you play in yet another one of the Golden Trio's sleuthing missions?"

"Nothing worth mentioning."

Ginny snorted and earned a glare from Hermione. "Oh it's worth mentioning. Hermione was going to go as Bulstrode and took a hair from her when they got into a fight."

"Ginny, stop right now! Malfoy doesn't need to know. It's not an important part of the story."

"It's back to Malfoy now, is it?" Draco asked, clearly amused by Hermione's reluctance to talk.

"So anyway, instead of a human hair, Hermione accidentally picked up one of Bulstrode's—"

"Cat hairs... You turned into a cat!" Draco started to chuckle and as the girls watched transfixed, the chuckle turned into a full-fledged laugh. He started laughing so hard he bent forward and wrapped his arms around his middle.

"I think we've done it, Hermione!" Ginny exclaimed, bouncing up and down on her seat. "I think we've finally broken Malfoy! He's gone insane. At last!" Ginny jumped up and pumped her fist in the air.

Draco looked up at her when it became imperative that he pause his laughter just enough to breathe. He was half glaring and half snickering, and a couple of tears of mirth managed to leak from his eyes. He thought he had control over his himself, that is, until he pictured Hermione as a cat again. Being a top potions student meant that he knew exactly what had happened to her and in his mind was the picture of Hermione as a black humanoid cat, complete with fur, whiskers, and a tail. Oh Merlin, he would give anything to have an everlasting picture of that. Well almost anything, as long as it wasn't his hair.

He started to laugh again until suddenly it changed into a despairing cry and he bent over clutching at his chest just over his heart.

"Draco? What is it, what's wrong?"

Draco didn't answer Hermione. It was impossible for him to say anything at the moment as it felt like his heart was being ripped to shreds. He was being overloaded with anguish and loneliness. The
despondent emotions tore at his soul. He vaguely heard the girls calling his name, but all he could do was shake his head.

"Ginny, something's wrong with Harry too!" Hermione had looked over at Harry and saw he was crying in his sleep; he made no noise, but his face was drenched in tears. Draco dragged himself off his bed and over to Harry's.

"What's wrong with him?" Hermione cried. "Is he in pain? We should do something! Are you feeling what he's feeling, Draco? Is that what's wrong with you?"

The Slytherin nodded his head, his hand still over his heart. Earlier, after Severus' had left and the witches had thoroughly and successfully terrified him with their Gryffindor openness, Draco explained about the strange bond he and Harry seemed to have. Hermione, in her never ending quest to gain more knowledge, immediately began firing out questions and then promised she'd go to the library after Harry woke up and do some research.

"What should we do? Should we wake him up?"

Under different circumstances, Draco would have found it funny that Hermione's mind seemed to have shut down, but what Harry was feeling therefore what Draco was feeling, it was anything but funny.

"Contact Madam Pomfrey. Just in case." Draco pushed Hermione to the door and she quickly ran out to retrieve help. Due to her worry over Harry, she failed to notice where she was going, rounded a corner and ran smack dab into a human wall and promptly fell back onto her bum. Hermione looked up to see whom she'd run into and was dismayed to see Professor Snape staring disdainfully down at her.

"I'm so sorry!" She quickly picked herself up as she was certain Snape would not be any help.

"Miss Granger, is there a reason why you've decided to run around and knock into innocent bystanders?"

"We need Madam Pomfrey and I was hurrying to the Floo."

Severus' eyes narrowed and he stepped closer to the witch. "And why exactly do you need Madam Pomfrey?"

Hermione frowned and answered. "It's Harry. Something is wrong with him."

"He's awakened then." Severus moved around the witch and began his way to Draco and Harry's room, but stopped when Hermione called out to him.

"No, sir! He's still asleep."

"Then what is it?" he bit out, impatience written clearly on his face.

"Harry is sleeping, but there are tears falling from his eyes. We think he might be in pain and I didn't know what to do. Draco," Severus' eyebrows went up past his hairline at that, "told me to Floo call Madam Pomfrey."

"I see. Perhaps I should have a look before you interrupt Pomfrey's work. She may not be needed." Hermione didn't bother to argue and followed after him.

Back in Harry's room, Draco hovered close by looking frantic and feeling completely useless. There
wasn't anything he could do to stop the tears from falling. But at least Harry wasn't screaming and he didn't look like he was in any physical pain. However, there was still emotional pain that was nearly drowning Draco and he just didn't know what to do! He wanted—no he needed to make it stop!

Draco curled his hands into fists, watching Ginny murmur softly into Harry's ear, caressing away the tears that fell, and in that moment he had never hated a Weasley more. That she could sit so close to Harry and have no worries about what people would think or say if she got too close to the Golden Boy because no one would ever put up an objection with her being so near him. It made him want to lash out at something.

As if she could feel his burning gaze on her, Ginny turned to look at him and raised one red eyebrow when she saw the hate and torment in his eyes. "Draco, stop trying to kill me with your eyes. It couldn't possibly work." She turned back to Harry and smiled. "Come over here and help me wake him. I think that's all he needs. Madam Pomfrey did say he'd be waking up about this time anyway."

Draco blinked at that. Blinking away the hateful feelings brought upon by jealousy. Had she just invited him to…he hesitated before moving, realizing he'd be admitting his feelings for Harry to her and to pretty much everyone else and Draco wasn't sure if he were ready for anyone to know it for a fact. But when he looked into her dancing eyes, he realized he didn't care, because Ginny obviously knew and she didn't seem bothered by it at all. Nor had Hermione.

That had surprised him, because the Slytherins and Gryffindors had the worst rivalry between Houses in the history of Hogwarts, and he always assumed none of the Gryffindors would ever give him a chance, especially these particular Gryffindors, whom he'd had the most negative experiences with. But Ginny's smile was soft and welcoming as she looked at him and so he let his mask fall and allowed the worry to show on his face as he came to stand by the bed across from Ginny. He didn't hesitate this time and lifted one of Harry's hands in his slightly bigger one. It was warm, which relieved him a little, and he began rubbing circles against the brunet's palm with his thumb. To his surprise, Harry's fingers slowly flexed and then curled around to hold Draco's thumb in place.

"Did you see that, Ginny? He moved. He must be waking up."

"He's not crying anymore either."

Draco nodded and he conjured a tissue to wipe at the left over tears. It was then Severus and Hermione returned, and for a moment, when Draco looked at his godfather, he stiffened and almost dropped Harry's hand, but Ginny quickly reached over to stop him.

"He needs you right now, Draco. He's always needed you. Did you know last year when you two stopped your fights and basically began ignoring each other, Harry got so depressed? He didn't understand why, but Hermione did."

"I didn't know exactly why. I didn't know he was hiding a massive secret from me," she said, mock glaring at her sleeping friend. "But I knew that it involved you in some way. You've both always been connected one way or another, and it's not really a big surprise that you two are now literally bonded."

When Draco looked at his godfather again, Severus was glaring at Hermione but other than that he didn't seem too bothered about what was happening between Harry and himself so Draco tightened his grip on Harry and tried to mentally soothe the sleeping Gryffindor.

"What do you think is wrong, Professor Snape?" Hermione asked.

Severus moved to stand beside Draco and looked down at Potter; resisting the urge to scowl at the
young man, reminded by the frailty of Harry's body that he wasn't the boy Severus had always thought him to be. And he was trying to come to terms with that and possibly see Potter in a different light. It was obvious Draco already saw it, and for his sake, Severus intended to see if he and Potter could possibly get passed their differences.

"We won't know until he wakes up, I'm afraid."

"Then let's wake him up now." Hermione leaned forward, brushing Harry's hair away from his pale face. "It's time to wake up now, Harry." She gasped when Harry moved his face away from her voice. Hermione's lips trembled and Ginny wrapped a comforting arm around the girl.

"It's alright Hermione. He probably doesn't realize it's you."

"He must hate me now."

"Don't be ridiculous, you silly girl! You should know that is not how Potter's mind works when it comes to his friends."

Every one stared at their Professor in shock. It seemed Snape knew more about Harry than he ever let on. And unlike Ginny and Hermione, Draco knew his godfather, and knew Severus had just tried, in his own Snape fashion, to comfort Hermione. This left Draco dumbfounded. Usually his godfather would rather die a horrible death one hundred thousand times before he would ever think about comforting a Gryffindor.

"Come on, Harry. Open your eyes," Ginny coaxed softly and smiled when Harry's eyelids began flickering.

They all expected to see his eyes open in the next few moments, but when nothing happened, except for the continuing tears, Draco lost his patience, leaned close to Harry's ear and yelled, "wake up idiot Gryffindor!"

"Draco, control. It wouldn't be in your best interests to deafen the boy."

"Sorry, Professor Snape."

"But look, it worked! He's waking up!"

Harry heard more voices than he expected to when he woke up. They were speaking softly around him and he felt someone holding his hands. On top of all that, something wet was on his face. Someone noticed he was waking and there were several inhaled gasps. He would have found it funny under different circumstances, but now he was only concerned about who was around him at the moment and hoped Draco happened to be one of those people.

He took a deep breath, steeling himself for whatever was to come, opened his eyes and froze. Not only was Draco there holding his hand, but Ginny was holding his other hand with Hermione smiling at him from beside her and Professor Snape staring with eyes void of any emotions. Or should he start calling him Uncle Sev now?

"Harry, how do you feel?" he turned his gaze on Hermione, and she flinched at the hard stare he gave her.

"I feel fine." Harry kept his voice flat. He didn't know why Hermione and Ginny were here and he was certain he didn't want to deal with that now, especially if Ron were around as well. He felt he needed to deal with Professor Snape before anything else and he turned to look at the man. "I need a Pensieve and a wand. I'm not sure if my wand is still useful as I'm pretty sure Dursley tried to destroy
it." Hermione's expression turned puzzled then. She'd never heard Harry refer to his uncle as Dursley.

"And why do you need a Pensieve, Potter?"

"There is something I need to show you." Harry thought that showing the parts of his memory where his parents were explaining to him about Snape would much easier and faster than having to try and explain to the Professor and making him believe, because the Pensieve wouldn't lie, and Snape would see for himself what Harry had dreamed had actually been real.

"Very well, I'll return with what you need. By the way, I took the liberty of removing all of your things, including your owl, from the Dursley home when I returned your aunt and cousin. I rescued your wand as well. There will be no need for you to ever return there, Potter." Severus removed the long piece of wood and handed it to Harry. He dropped Ginny's hand to take it and felt Draco's satisfaction that his hand hadn't been dropped. Their eyes locked and Draco smirked which in turn had Harry blushing and turning away to look up at Snape's shoulder.

"Thank you, Professor."

Severus' head bowed in a curt nod before he turned and left the room. Everyone was silent, and it was only a little uncomfortable. The silence stretched on; no one really knew what to say. Finally silence became too much for Harry. "What's on my face? Why is it wet?" he'd wiped his hand across his face.

"Well...you were crying in your sleep, Harry," Hermione supplied. "And we didn't know what to do." They were all looking at him expectantly for some kind of explanation.

"...bloody hell. Isn't anything within the Wizarding World kept private?"

"Course not, Potter. You should know better by now," Draco said, trying to keep his voice light. He wanted to know what was wrong, but didn't think Harry was ready for that.

*If you want, I will tell you later... Can you do something for me?* Draco raised an eyebrow in question. *I need you to take Hermione and Ginny somewhere and distract them for a while. At least until I've finished talking with Professor Snape.*

*What's in it for me?*

Harry rolled his eyes. *Whatever you want. Just add it to the tab.*

*Yes, you seem to be racking up a rather large bill, Harry. I do hope this will be a permanent activity.*

Harry's eyes lit up and he laughed. For the first time in many months, Harry's laugh was real, and not forced. It felt wonderful, and it affected those around him as well. Draco was mesmerized. He'd never been a recipient of one of Harry's laughs before, always having seen and heard it from a far, and had always wanted to be the one those shining emerald eyes were smiling at. Draco almost rolled his eyes at himself. He was getting way too soft. And it was all the fault of the Gryffindors.

*That would depend on what you require for payment, wouldn't it?*

*Hmm, I suppose I'll have to really think about it then and get back to you. And I will take Hermione and Ginny for you, Harry. I'm sure Hermione would like to go to the library already.* Draco enjoyed the pure shock that entered Harry's eyes upon hearing the names Hermione and Ginny come out of his mouth.
"Um, hello? Hope I'm not spoiling a romantic moment or anything." Draco shot Ginny a quelling glare. "But I thought I'd just remind you that you weren't alone."

"We are aware of that, Ginny. Come on, let's go to the library." Draco reached over, grabbed Ginny's arm, and started dragging her away.

"Harry…"

"It's okay, Hermione." Harry gave her a small smile. "We'll talk later. There are just some things I have to go over with Professor Snape alone."

Hermione smiled in return. "Okay, Harry."

*And so do we.*

Harry looked over, eyeing the blond shyly beneath his eyelashes. *Of course, Draco.*

It was Ginny and Hermione who had to drag Draco from the room after that. When Severus returned, he found Harry alone and sitting up in bed, his head turned away from the door, towards the window. Severus was very curious as to why Potter wanted to use the Pensieve. "Here is the Pensieve, Potter. I will leave you alone for a moment." He put the Pensieve on the bedside table and turned to leave.

"No, sir. The Pensieve is for you." Severus turned and fixed Harry with a stare. Harry quickly went on before he lost his nerve under that stare. "Something happened when I was asleep and I was asked to give you a message."

"And who is the sender of this message?"

"My mother."

Severus stepped back and looked as if he'd been slapped. "What?"

"I said my mother has a message for you."

Severus narrowed his eyes to angry slits. "Potter, if this is your idea of a joke-"

"No, Professor Snape, I swear I'm telling you the truth. That's why I want the Pensieve, to show you I'm not making it up. Please. Please look, Professor."

Harry laid the tip of his wand against his temple and drew out the specific parts of his parents' visit that he wanted the Professor to see. Some parts he put in weren't really necessary, but Harry wanted Snape to see what his parents really thought of Severus.

"Very well. I will look in the Pensieve."

"Thank you, sir."

Severus nodded, and then touched the surface of the fluid that resembled liquid wind. The room went silent after Snape was taken into his memories. He wondered what Snape's reaction would be. Obviously it wouldn't be very good, that was a given. It would be a miracle if Harry escaped unscathed from this.

*Why so nervous, Harry?*

Harry released a breath and relaxed against the head board. Draco's voice eased his nerves, which
Harry suspected had been the expected outcome. He had to smile at that. His relationship with Draco had changed drastically in the span of hours and he could honestly say it made him happier than he had been in a very long time.

_Snape always makes me a little nervous._

_He's not so bad once you get to know him. He's my godfather, did you know?_ Harry was pleased that Draco trusted him enough to divulge personal information to him like that. It really was a good sign.

_Really, wow. No, I didn't know._

_Are you going to tell me why you've got Severus up there with a Pensieve?_ Harry looked at the Pensieve and widened his eyes, nerves returning again.

_He's my uncle. He's Uncle Snape!_ At the moment, Harry didn't care that his tone had been slightly crazed. There was complete silence again as Draco absorbed this shock. And Harry could feel the shock coming from Draco through the bond. Then the shock was taken over by amusement.

_I suppose I can see why that would make you cry._ Harry's light mood immediately vanished, and his knuckles turned white as he clutched his hands into fists. _Merlin, Harry. I'm sorry. What is it? Tell me what happened?_ Draco sounded worried, and Harry felt Draco's need to come back up to the room.

_It's all right, Draco. I'll be fine for now. Stay with the girls._

_Fine._

_Stop pouting. It won't do you any good._

_I am not pouting, Potter,_ replied Draco with a mental sniff. Harry rolled his eyes. He'd never noticed before, but Draco was very good at distracting him.

_That's why we'd be good together._ Draco felt Harry's own shock. _What? Did you think I had any other motive, Harry? Did you think I just wanted to be your friend?_  

_No, I just thought… I don't know what to think right now, Draco._

_Listen Harry. I'll stay here with Hermione and Ginny until you're ready for us to return, all right?_  

_Yeah, okay. Hey, I wanted to ask…where's Draco and what have you done with him? The Draco I know wouldn't be getting on so well with my fri… with Hermione and Ginny._

_They're not so bad, I suppose. Now that you mention it, you do know they are still your friends, right? They've both been really worried, and Hermione broke up with Ron so she could move in here to help you any way she can._

_Hermione broke up with Ron because of me?_  

_It's not your fault. He definitely had it coming, especially after what he tried to do._

_What?_ Harry couldn't tell what Draco was thinking, but whatever it was it was making the Slytherin very angry.

_Nothing._

_Draco…_
Maybe I'll tell you later.

Harry leaned back against the headboard and closed his eyes and waited for Snape to finish with the Pensieve. A little time later he opened his eyes and was surprised to find Snape out of the Pensieve, standing pale, and staring wide eyed at Harry, who sat up slowly, keeping his eyes locked with his uncle's. "Sir?"

"Lily…" Severus broke eye contact and stared at the ground. He brought one hand up to his face while the other flew back behind him and he stumbled back and grasped at the edge of the bed. He took deep breaths to try and steady himself, though it was hardly working. Severus lowered himself down to the bed.

What must he be thinking, Harry wondered. He knew he shouldn't, but he couldn't help but stare at the wizard before him. Snape looked devastated. "I didn't know…my sister?" he spoke to himself but Harry was hanging on his every word. Some strange part of him wanted this snarky bastard to recognize him as his family, as his nephew. Severus Snape was the only living blood connection Harry had left and that meant something to him.

Abruptly, Severus stood, looking fully composed if not a little urgent. "I must go," was all he said and made his way to the door.

Harry sighed. Of course nothing would change. He was an idiot to have entertained the thought that Snape might have wanted some sort of family connection as well. "I understand, sir." He'd tried to sound untouched, but Severus heard the disappointment beneath the words. He stopped at the door and turned back to the young man.

"Harry." Hearing his name come from Snape's mouth made Harry snap his head up to look at Snape in shock. "I will get the journal to verify all this and then I will return." Then he opened the door and was gone. Harry was still in shock, and for a moment he became light headed and thought he might do something completely unmanly, like faint.

*I'm contacting Madam Pomfrey.*

*No, Draco! I'm fine.*

*No, I'm getting Pomfrey.* And with that tone, Harry knew nothing he said would change Draco's mind.

"Dammit!"
Running

Life Renovations

Chapter Seven

Running

Draco did contact Madam Pomfrey and she immediately made her way to Number Twelve to check on Harry. After a few tests, she told Harry, his friends, and a very worried Sirius that he was fine, he needed to eat, and then go back to sleep. Hermione and Ginny returned to the Burrow until the next day, when Hermione would move in. They hadn't had a talk yet, but Harry wanted Hermione near him anyway since it was quite clear she had not turned her back on him like Ron had said.

After the girls had gone, Harry sat with Draco and Sirius, and they were all trying to talk about a safe topic—which was harder than it seemed, especially in Sirius' case. So they were all relieved when Remus came limping into the room and immediately gave Harry and Draco a large block of chocolate. "Really Moony, is chocolate your cure for everything?"

"Of course not, Padfoot. I just find it's good for all sorts of occasions."

"Before I eat this I'd really rather have something more substantial to eat. Can we go to the kitchen?"

"I'll bring you something to eat," Remus said, but Harry stopped him.

"No, I want to go to the kitchen." There were looks exchanged around the room as Harry pulled back the blankets and stood up.

Draco moved over and put a restraining hand on Harry's arm. "You should stay in bed…"

Harry had to tilt his head back in order to look him in the eye and when he did this, Draco's grip tightened a bit. The force of the attraction was inexorably stronger now that they were standing face to face and both were slightly relieved they weren't alone. Sirius frowned at them and nudged Remus, who sighed and pat his best mate's arm in support. This was going to bring back some rather painful memories for his friend.

"I'll be fine," Harry said softly, pulling back from Draco and looking at the elder wizards. "I need to stretch my legs anyway." In fact, he felt like pacing around the house. He was anxious for Professor Snape to return, as insane as that sounded. And he knew he'd feel better sitting in the kitchen. "Has anyone seen my glasses?" Harry looked around; his eyes squinted, trying to see where the spectacles could be. And then he remembered. "Oh right." Destroying and burning Harry's glasses was the first thing Dursley did once Harry returned to Privet Dr. for the summer. Maybe it was time for him to do something about his eyesight anyway.

"Come on, pup. I'll fix you something." Harry allowed Sirius to throw an arm around his shoulders and steer him to the door.

"Thanks Sirius." They made it halfway down to the kitchen before Harry decided he couldn't hide his curiosity anymore. "So, Padfoot?"

"Hmm?"

"I heard when you were at Hogwarts you and my father had a lot of fun with Lucius Malfoy…"
Sirius would have fallen down the stairs in his surprise and shock if Harry hadn't been expecting it and was able to keep his godfather from breaking his neck. "Well? Are you going to explain you and Malfoy and my dad?"

"Blimey, Harry! What a thing to spring on a bloke!" Harry only grinned at him. "How did you find out about that?"

"You wouldn't believe me. And are you seriously going to worry about how I found out? I would like to know how that even happened." Harry and Sirius walked into the kitchen.

Sirius shrugged and headed for the counter, Harry right behind him. "It just happened, Harry. It's not like it was planned or anything."

Harry stared, he looked like a fish the way he was working his mouth. Remus and Draco entered the kitchen, Draco shooting Harry and Sirius a suspicious glare. Harry recovered himself and sidled closer to his godfather so that their heads were bent together. "How can you be so nonchalant about this? This is Lucius Malfoy we're talking about here," he whispered.

Sirius maintained the nonchalant look, when all he wanted to do was run away from this conversation. "Lucius wasn't so bad when it happened. We were seeing each other for some time. Your dad just jumped in a couple of times because he was curious and we didn't mind having an extra partner."

"You dated Lucius Malfoy," Harry said again as if repeatedly saying it would get Sirius to see how serious that statement was. But Sirius only shrugged and continued making the sandwiches.

"I don't see why you're making a big deal out of it, Harry. Especially not with the way you and baby Malfoy are acting. I guess we both just have good taste, eh?" Sirius gently jabbed his godson in the ribs and grinned when Harry started to blush and make busy helping with sandwiches. Sirius looked over his shoulder and sniggered. "Look, he's glaring at me like he wishes I would die." Harry looked back and grinned. Sirius was right, Draco was glaring daggers at him.

What is that look for?

Draco sat back in his chair, startled. He'd been so intent on drilling holes into Black's head that he didn't see when Harry turned to look at him. He quickly composed himself and pretended to study his nails, his white blond hair hanging down over his eyes and hiding the creeping blush.

What look would that be?

Never mind. Harry grinned and turned back to the counter. "What happened between you and Lucius?"

Sirius sighed. "You're going to keep asking until you know everything, aren't you?"

"I'm sorry but yes."

Sirius sighed again and looked over his shoulder. "Did you tell Malfoy?"

"No. I wasn't sure if I should."

"You might as well. Moony already knows, and it will be worth it to see the look on Malfoy junior's face, if he doesn't know already. And maybe little Malfoy can use it to make his father uncomfortable," Sirius said as they brought the plates to the table where Remus and Draco were sitting. Remus had tried starting a conversation with Draco while waiting for Sirius and Harry, but
the blond's attention was on no one and nothing but Harry. Remus thought it very amusing and hadn't been insulted in the least since it was clear to him what was going on. Draco couldn't help himself.

_Must that mutt always be so near you, Harry?_

Harry almost choked on a bit of sandwich, but recovered in time. Across from him, Draco was scowling at the table. Harry rolled his eyes and sent him a mental pat of reassurance. "Draco, do you know anything about who your father dated at Hogwarts?"

Draco looked up and shook his head. And then he narrowed his eyes. "I've only been told about Mother. Why?"

"So you never had any idea that your father and Sirius dated at one point and occasionally they had a threesome with my father?"

"You're not serious!"

"Why does everyone make such a big deal about it?"

"Because it's our fathers! Right, Draco?" Harry looked at his… well… Harry really didn't know what to call Draco. They weren't exactly friends, but they weren't enemies or strangers, if that makes sense. And they weren't really a couple, but there was obviously more between them than just a friendly attraction.

Those thoughts disappeared when he felt anger and betrayal coming off Draco in waves and the Slytherin's eyes had gone from warm silver to bright hot steel. He pushed back in his chair, muttered an excuse, and was out of the kitchen before anyone knew what to say.

_Draco?_

Harry's call remained unanswered and directly after he felt himself cut off from Draco altogether, which was more painful than when he had to let his parents go for the second time. He felt himself go numb and slide out of his chair to land on the ground in a heap of trembling limbs. Draco wasn't with him anymore. He couldn't feel any part of his blond counterpart, and Harry had never felt so alone. Somewhere in the house a door slammed shut and the symbolism seemed correct to Harry, as doors seemed to always close in his face. No one wanted anything to do with him. After a while, they always left.

"Harry? Harry, can you hear me? What's wrong?"

When Harry didn't answer, Sirius picked him up, prepared to take him back to bed. Harry couldn't understand why Draco cut him off…he'd never expected Draco to take the news quite like that.

"I'm going to get Draco. I have a feeling this has to do with whatever bond it is between them." Remus supplied.

"No," Harry whispered lowly. "Please, leave him alone."

"But Harry…"

"No, I get it. I should have listened. At least I have you two. I really couldn't ask or want more."

Remus nodded but he didn't quite understand. Did Harry think he didn't have Draco? That was ridiculous. Remus had seen what was going on between the two young wizards the moment Madam...
Pomfrey told him he was free to leave bed and Remus had headed straight for Harry's room. He'd been surprised to feel the two most notorious enemies of Hogwarts already emotionally bonded.

Being a werewolf allowed him to smell the extra magic of a forming bond swirling around. And their feelings for each other were already around before the bond; otherwise the power of it wouldn't have been so strong. So why did Harry think he needed to resign himself to being alone, or being without Draco? As soon as Harry was situated in bed, Remus went in search of Malfoy to find out what was wrong with him in order for the blond to put Harry at ease.

His search ended at the library. Draco tried to keep everyone out by putting a strong locking charm on the door, but Remus had easily disabled it and found Draco fuming in front of the large fireplace with a bottle of Firewhiskey for company. Remus wondered where Draco had found the drink.

"What do you want?" Draco didn't even bother to look up from the fire.

Remus moved a chair closer to Draco's and sat down. He snatched the bottle from Draco's fingers and took a healthy swig. "I hope you don't mind sharing with a werewolf."

"And if I do?"

Remus shrugged and passed the bottle back, "then it's really too bad, isn't it? You'll have to get over it, I suppose."

Draco looked sideways at him. "What are you doing here, Lupin? Did Harry send you?"

"And if he did?" Draco shrugged. "Sirius had to carry Harry to bed after you left."

Draco's eyes shot around to Remus. "What? Why? What's wrong with him?" he jumped up. "Did you Floo Madam Pomfrey? Why are you still sitting there, wolf?"

"I thought so..." Remus shook his head in amusement. "Harry's fine for now. Draco, why don't you sit down and tell me what happened when Harry told you about your father and Sirius. Surely it didn't make you that angry?"

"It did." Draco sat down again. Lupin wasn't so bad, even if he did dress like a beggar and turn into a dangerous creature every full moon. He was one of the few people who had stood by Harry.

"But why? You are, after all, attracted to Harry, aren't you? There's no difference."

"That's why I'm furious."

"I don't understand. Care to explain it to me?"

"No I wouldn't," Draco growled, and pushed from his chair. "I don't know you."

"This has to do with you and your father, doesn't it?" Remus ignored Draco's rude tones, as he knew they were only a defensive mechanism.

Draco's hands fisted at his sides, and his head was raised and he stood as Malfoys were supposed to stand. Draco suddenly looked up at the ceiling as if seeing through the floor and into Harry's room, and his stance relaxed. He grabbed the Firewhiskey from Remus, and threw himself back into his lounge chair. After taking a throat-burning gulp, he handed the Firewhiskey back to Remus and began speaking.

"I was in my fourth year at Hogwarts and it was during the first task of the TriWizard Tournament
when I realized I was gay."

"You knew the exact time?"

Draco nodded. "Yeah, I didn't like this bloke, but I respected him by that point. But then I saw him compete, and he blew my mind. He didn't want to be there. It was clear as day, and yet he went out there and he just… it was amazing. I realized I really didn't want anyone else after that, boy or girl. I came to the decision, and it's never changed. Even when I tried to change it… Then I made the mistake of telling my father when I'd gone home for the summer. Father and I had never kept secrets before, I had always confided in him, so I didn't think twice about telling him. I thought he might understand, or at least come to terms with it, because I know he loves me.

"People seem to think differently, but they don't know what my father is really like…" Draco turned from Remus to stare at the fire. "Anyway, he didn't understand at all. He tried everything except beating the gayness out of me. He was totally against it; and before we were done and he was called away, his office was in ruins." Draco stopped and closed his eyes. "He hasn't gotten over it either. Sometimes when he looks at me I know he wishes he could have nothing to do with me…. He never told me about him and Black."

"And a Potter. Don't forget James was there."

"Thanks, Professor. That makes it so much better. It makes it so much easier when you find out that your father is a fucking hypocrite!"

"Ah. And that's what's really bothering you."

"Wouldn't it bother you too? He could stand there and say all that stuff to his son, when he's liked blokes all along!"

"You don't know that. He did marry Narcissa after all."

"It was an arranged marriage. And it doesn't matter. I'm not going to let anyone dictate to me how I should live my life anymore."

"That's good. You should tell Harry. I'm afraid he drew the wrong conclusion as to why you left the kitchen in such a rush."

Draco groaned. "The idiot Gryffindor thinks I abandoned him too, didn't he?" Remus nodded. "I should have realized he'd think that when I put up my shields. But I did it to keep him from feeling all the rage I was feeling towards my father. I'll talk to him." Draco stood up, but Remus put out an arm, offering the Firewhiskey back.

"Stay. He's already asleep. Sirius is coming down and as Harry's father figures we want to have a chat with you, Draco."

Just then, Sirius loped into the library with another bottle of Firewhiskey and a maniacal gleam in his eyes. Draco wanted to run. He wanted to run far, and away, and as fast as humanly possible.

"Sit, Draco!" Sirius pushed Draco back into his chair. "Let's have a toast!"

"I'd rather go."

"Too bad!" Sirius' laughter echoed throughout the house, and Draco curled up in his chair by the library fire, afraid and wishing Harry was down to protect him from his crazy self appointed guardians.
Sirius hadn’t planned on making the situation between Harry and Draco get any worse, but unfortunately that’s the way it turned out. Draco planned to go back to the room he shared with Harry to sleep, but never made it. Draco, Sirius, and Remus were up to nearly dawn in the library, discussing things, mainly the war and their growing mistrust of Dumbledore, all the while filling themselves with Firewhiskey. Thanks to Sirius, who happened to keep pulling bottles of Firewhiskey out from behind his back throughout the night, Draco got so sloshed that he couldn’t have moved from his chair even if there had been a fire consuming all of Twelve Grimmauld Place.

And so, when Harry awoke it was to an empty room. There was no sign of Draco having ever been in bed the night before. And Professor Snape had not returned either. Harry lay back again and closed his eyes. He felt the sting of disappointment pricking his eyes and pushed the heels of his palms against them. There was nothing worth crying over, was there? He shouldn’t have expected anything good or special to come from the connection he and Draco shared. It was the Wizarding World after all, and things like their bond happened all the time. Right? He was sure there had to be some way to disconnect whatever it was that bonded them together the way they were. Even as he tried to push the pain from that thought away, he knew his heart would be left an empty shell if and when that was to happen. But maybe this was for the best. It was too dangerous to depend on someone other than himself.

Harry jumped out of bed and quickly dressed himself. The sun was hardly up, so he knew the occupants of the house were still asleep. There weren’t many people at Headquarters anyway at the moment, so he was able to sneak out without being noticed. He wasn’t certain where he was going, especially since he couldn’t see very well, but he had his wand, a small sack of Galleons, and a bit of muggle money. Harry shrugged. He didn’t care where he was going. He just wanted to walk, to get away, to distance himself.

Aware of the risk he was taking, leaving the headquarters like this, he kept his wand up his sleeve as it was too warm for a coat, and he didn’t wear robes to keep from being overly noticed walking down muggle roads. He knew they would all be worried, and they would all most definitely be angry that he put himself at such a risk. That’s right... Mustn’t let our Savior, the Boy-Who-Lived be senselessly murdered on the side of the street before he’s able to take out the big bad Dark Lord. Perish the thought!

Yes, Harry was quite bitter by now. And if Snape were there when he got back and tried to stick his beak nose into it, Harry would not restrain himself from cursing the greasy haired git. Harry shoved his hands deep into his pockets and stared at his toes as he walked. He tried not to think of Draco, but he was always there, occupying his every thought, even with a shield up blocking thoughts. It was weird. Even when they shielded their thoughts and emotions, Harry could still feel Draco deep in his soul; there was still a part of the blond in his head. A warm spot, thrumming with life…

What he needed was a distraction. Harry decided to go to Diagon Alley. He knew getting there safely and before tomorrow afternoon would be distraction enough. Especially when he planned to get there the muggle way. By foot. Mood lightened by his determination and the mission he’d given himself, Harry stood straighter and walked with a confident stride down the sidewalk and away from Number Twelve Grimmauld Place.

It wasn’t until noon when the Weasley twins arrived, loudly, and everyone gathered in the kitchen bleary eyed and hung over, did they realize Harry had left. Draco stumbled into the kitchen looking exactly as if he’d been sleeping on one of the library tables. He glared around the room, mostly in Sirius’ direction, and promptly asked, ”where’s Harry?”

The others shrugged.
"We just got here, mate," Fred said as he took the initiative and tried to scrounge some coffee up.

"Haven't seen Harry yet." George was putting the kettle on. Draco stumbled back out of the kitchen without another word, and could be heard making his way up the stairs.

"Oi! What's up with you two and Malfoy?" George asked, taking a seat and passing a basket of scones around, courtesy of Molly Weasley.

"Sirius thought it would be a good idea to loosen Draco's tongue with Firewhiskey, so we cornered him in the library after Harry went to bed," Remus said, clutching his skull. He was trying to remember where Sirius kept the potions. It was obvious Sirius wouldn't be in working order until the coffee arrived.

"Too bad the prat can hold his alcohol," Sirius croaked out. "He certainly doesn't get that from Lu—his father."

"But did your mission succeed in any way?" Fred asked eagerly coming back to the table with the coveted coffee.

"Not really." Remus gave a thankful smile to Fred as he passed the coffee around. Then he grinned at Sirius, who was gulping at his coffee, regardless of the heat; he knew a grand healing spell for his mouth after all.

Draco burst back into the room suddenly and skidded to a halt in front of the table. He looked frantic.

"Harry's gone! He's not in the room, he's gone!" The words burst out of his mouth in rapid succession, allowing no gaps for a breath.

"Calm down, Draco," Remus said while standing up, but Draco started shaking his head. Remus smiled, "I'm sure he's in the bathroom or something. There are a lot of rooms here."

"No, I checked. And it wouldn't matter where he is, but I can't hear him either. He's built a wall to keep me out. I can feel him, but I can't communicate at all. And he's not here! He's gone somewhere."

Draco wasn't making much sense, but everyone got the message: Harry was not in the house, and Draco apparently needed Harry to stay sane. Remus believed pandemonium would have broken out, and Dumbledore would have been called had Severus not shown up then.

"Quiet!" Surprisingly, everyone listened. "Draco, go upstairs and get cleaned up. We are going out. As for the rest of you, do not worry. If Potter has indeed gone out you can be assured he will not be harmed by any of the Dark Lord's followers."

"But how can you know that?" Draco demanded. Severus cast one impatient glare at his godson and Draco was wise enough to do as he was told.

"He's right, Severus. How do you know that?" Remus said, placing a restraining hand on Sirius' shoulders.

"That is the decision the Dark Lord has come to regarding Harry Potter until such time he deems it necessary to focus back on Potter. Until then he and his followers will be busy playing other more important games. The Dark Lord has ordered a cease fire on Harry Potter."

"What?" Sirius jumped to his feet and approached Severus. "And why should we believe you, Snape?"
"Padfoot, calm down."

"Yes, you diseased mutt, go find your muzzle." Severus spat, and then left the kitchen in search of Draco.

"Well that was cheerful!" Fred said.

"What are we going to do about Harry?"

"I can't imagine Severus thinks he can actually keep Draco from searching for Harry. Their bond is too strong, too new right now for him to do otherwise."

"What are you talking about?" George asked. "What bond?"

Before Remus could answer, a rumbling noise started to come from the fireplace.

"Uh oh! You're going to …"

"Have two squealing, crying, hysterical girls for…"

"Guests in a minute."

"Now really isn't the time for this," Sirius said, but Remus was shaking his head.

"No, I think Severus may have an idea where Harry will end up. And Ginny and Hermione might know of places he might have taken himself."

"Oi, that's a great idea, mate!" Sirius grinned as the girls tumbled out of the Floo, followed by some luggage. "I knew there were more than ninety-nine reasons why I keep you around!" Sirius exclaimed patting his friend on the back. Remus chuckled and helped the girls up.

"Good afternoon, Hermione, Ginny."

"Good afternoon, Professor Lupin. Sirius."

"You don't have to call me that anymore. Remus or Moony is fine. And I should warn you before Draco returns and works up another panic, Harry has left the house and is now missing." The girls' mouths dropped open, but he continued before they could say anything. "But Severus has reported You-Know-Who retracted his orders to kill or capture Harry, and I tend to believe him on this subject."

Hermione was nodding her head. "Yes, Professor Snape wouldn't lie about this, especially when it comes to Harry's life. I wonder what Voldemort is thinking?"

"I'm not so sure that we should automatically trust Snape with this," Ginny began uncomfortably.

"Thank you for your vote of confidence in me, Miss. Weasley. Rest assured Harry will be quite safe, and we'll return with him before nightfall. I will send word when we find him." Severus nodded at them all then led panicking Draco out of Number Twelve, leaving behind a growling Sirius, a speculative Remus, and four gob smacked youngsters. Ginny was the first to recover.

"So we missed a lot. Care to fill us in, Remus."

"Is it true, Severus? The Dark Lord no longer wants Harry?" Draco asked as he followed his godfather out of Order headquarters and past the wards so they could Apparate.
"Yes."

Draco only had a few seconds to be amazed before he was pulled into an along-side Apparition. They arrived outside the wards of Spinner's End. "Have you forgotten I'm still a target for going against the Dark Lord? They'll find me the moment I pass through your wards! You said You-Know-Who is constantly watching this place because of your personal relationship with me."

"No, Draco. Your life debt was also released. Technically it was released the moment the Dark Lord thought he killed you when he invaded Harry's mind. Fortunately for you, his killing curse wasn't able to work. Voldemort is convinced you and Harry do not pose a certain threat to him at the moment."

Draco said shaking his head; he didn't understand how any of that had come about. He would ask for a detailed explanation later. "Are we at least going to find Harry? He shouldn't be out walking around! He needs more bed rest! Stupid idiot Gryffindor!"

Severus turned and sneered at his godson. "Where has your control gone, Draco? And yes, we are going to find him, but first I must speak with someone before we go to search for the nuisance."

Draco jumped forward and growled in a feral manner. "Never call him that!" he snarled.

Severus was momentarily startled. That growl had been all animal and Draco's pupils had dilated into slits like a cat's with the irises literally glowing silver. It lasted only a moment before Draco reverted back into himself. Severus recovered from his shock quickly, mentally filing away the incident. Another clue into what was happening to Harry and Draco.

"Apologies. I forgot you prefer the term idiot Gryffindor."

"Yes, that's better. Severus… can you please tell me something. Anything about what's happening between Harry and me? Please?"

Severus paused just inside the house to face his godson. "Draco… as far as I can tell it's looking like soul mates. It would explain everything. Even your behavior towards each other as young boys. This is all I can say at the moment. More research is in order."

"Soul mates," Draco whispered in awe.

Severus nodded and remained there, watching and allowing Draco a moment to compose himself. He was surprised when a wide smile graced Draco's face a moment later. He hadn't expected his godson to take to the idea so quickly. Then again a bond like this just doesn't happen overnight. It grows and strengthens over time. And since Harry is approaching his seventeenth birthday, it will get stronger and eventually demand to be consummated.

"That explains so much," Draco breathed.

"How so?"

"I've had this… I've had this ache, mind and body. Since last November."

Severus nodded. "It would have gotten worse. Especially since you and Potter stopped speaking and stopped laying hands on each other." He rolled his eyes when Draco smirked. "I meant in a violent capacity, nitwit."

He turned away and headed down the small hallway. Draco followed his godfather through the tiny disgusting house the size of a shack, scrunching his nose up in disdain. He was quite glad Severus
had had some financial sense and started making Galleons off his Galleons and was now able to live far more comfortably and move out of this filth. Severus only kept this decrepit house as a place to hide out if the need arise.

The very short journey ended in the kitchen. It wasn't anything special either. The sink looked like it had never been used. The counters were covered in filth, stains, and nicks. There was a small table in the center big enough for two people. One of those seats was filled. "Ah, my guest is here already." Severus moved aside allowing Draco to see who awaited them and he froze.

"Uncle Sev?" Draco glanced between his father and godfather, wondering if he had just been betrayed.

"Stop cowering and come sit with me, Draco. We have things to discuss."

"A Malfoy never cowers; unless your name is Lucius and you cower at your Dark Lord's feet! Stop ordering me around, father. I'll not let you ruin my life by making me like you, fucking hypocrite!"

Lucius' grip upon his snake cane flexed but he gave no other indication that he was bothered by his son's disrespectful tirade. He coolly gazed at Draco until his son had to look down at the floor. Lucius smirked.

"My, my, my. Draco seems to be in a frightful state today. I thought I instructed you to see that he isn't harmed in any way, Severus." Lucius eyed his friend, while Draco looked wide eyed between them. Severus shrugged and leaned against the dirty counter. Both Malfoys winced.

"Draco has become very attached to my nephew, and vice versa. And now my nephew is missing. Draco is, of course, concerned about his whereabouts."

"Now that you are here, Father, Severus' nephew will have to wait a moment. Perhaps you could clear up some confusion on my part."

"Of course, Draco. What do you want to know?"

"Explain your relationship with Sirius Black and James Potter during Hogwarts." Draco took great pleasure in seeing the color drain from his father's face.

"Did you do this?" Lucius hissed at Severus.

"No, it wasn't me. Black must have told him."

"Black told me nothing. It was Harry who found out."

"Harry Potter?"

"Who else would it be, Father?"

"How in Merlin's name did he find out about it?"

Severus kept his mouth shut, but he knew Harry received that information the same way he'd received word Severus was his uncle

"That's not the important issue, Father. Why don't you explain to me why you were a bastard to your son when he confided in you about something he kept secret from the rest of the world? You blew up in my face. You tried everything to straighten me out. You looked at me like I was a muggle... and all the while you were being a hypocrite!"
Lucius looked pointedly at Severus, who took the hint and quickly and happily left the two Malfoys alone. Lucius looked at his cane a moment and took a deep breath. "Draco, I don't have an excuse. But I am sorry."

"Pardon?" Draco's eyes practically bugged out of his head. Did he just hear his father, Lucius Malfoy, bastard extraordinaire, apologize?

"I wasn't thinking like a father. I let the Dark Lord overwhelm all my good senses and judgment, and even though it is not a worthy excuse, the Dark Lord was expected back in a few months time when you told me. I didn't want to have to deal with that at the time. I should never have made you think you were anything less than a Malfoy. I never did think that."

Draco wasn't sure what to say. "Err…"

"Draco, about Sirius and Potter…"

Sirius? Draco eyed his father. That relationship must have meant something to his father to let that slip. Draco smirked. "Let me guess. Grandfather forced you to marry the wrong Black." Lucius stared at his son for a minute, and then smiled. It was a small, stretched too thin smile, but a smile nonetheless.

"I'm glad to know my son is no fool. Very good deduction, Draco."

Draco was kind of stunned despite his calm demeanor. "So… if given the choice, you would have picked Sirius Black to marry?" Lucius didn't verbally answer, instead stood up in search of Severus, which was answer enough for Draco. Following his father he asked, "what would you do if I came to you with the request to marry my soul mate, which happens to be a boy?"

Lucius stopped and looked down, eyes cast to the side. "It sounds like you've already found him."

Draco slowly nodded. "I have."

"And how do you feel about that?"

Lucius and Draco stood facing each other in the darkened hallway of Severus' mouse hole, their gazes, almost identical, never wavering from each other. Draco smiled and his father looked startled. He hadn't seen Draco with such a bright look on his face since he was a little boy. "It's terrifying; my stomach gets unsettled so much that I might get sick. There is a connection between us, which has forced us to act on our attraction to each other, yet if the connection weren't there, I know that we would have ended up the way we are now anyway at some point. I worry that it couldn't possibly be worth it at times. But then I can feel him in my head, in my soul, and it's the greatest feeling in the world. And I've… I've loved him since I was fourteen," he admitted softly.

"Obviously your time with this person has made you soft, Draco. You must not let him weaken you."

Draco's eyes flashed like molten silver, and for a second it seemed Lucius was looking at a dangerous stranger. "He makes me want to be better," Draco hissed. "I'm already stronger because of him. I wanted your blessings, Father, but I will not care if I do not get it."

Draco turned to leave and was stopped when Lucius grabbed his arm. "I give my blessings. As you said, I wouldn't want to be a fucking hypocrite." Draco blushed and Lucius laughed. "Oh yes. I must meet him. A pureblood, I hope?"

"Luckily for you, he just found out that he is."
"Oh? Do I know him? It's not Zabini is it? You two are rather fond of each other."

"First, you've just welcomed the vilest pictures into my head. Thanks. And no, it's not Blaise. Merlin, he's like my brother."

"Well I assume it's this nephew of Severus' then. He dropped enough hints. Though I'm certain Severus is an only child and couldn't possibly have any nephews."

"He's a Gryffindor."

"Draco, tell me it's not true!"

Draco smirked. "Yes, it's true. He's also due to receive his inheritance left by his deceased parents in less than two weeks, and his wealth almost rivals ours."

"That is good news. Hmmm, a wealthy pureblooded Gryffindor... it can't be Weasley, thank Merlin! Not Longbottom?" The fear was so great that his father forgot his mask and revealed exactly how devastated and traumatized he would be if it turned out to be Neville Longbottom. In revenge for having suggested such a despicable thing, Draco was going to let the silence stretch out, and leave his father to think such a thing could be true. But Severus chose this moment to pop up again.

"Oh for Merlin's sake, Draco! Tell your father who my nephew is already."

"Yes, Draco. Do go on and tell me your soul mate is not Neville Longbottom. I'm begging you...."

"You should have guessed it when Draco told you about the boy's Inheritance, Lucius. Which must mean the boy is about to have a birthday."

"As I recall, Longbottom's birthday is coming up," Lucius responded as he looked blankly back and forth between his son and friend. The only thing going through Lucius' mind was, please not Longbottom. Anyone but Longbottom...I'd give my blood for anyone but Longbottom...

"My soul mate is not Neville Longbottom." He smirked when Lucius let out a relieved sigh. "It's Harry Potter." Yes, father, that's right. The-Idiot-Boy-Who-Lived-To-Be-Gorgeous.

Lucius snorted in a most unMalfoylike manner. "Figures. Fate is always drawn to improbabilities. At least you picked someone with potential and the looks to go with it. The Potter men have always been lovely."

"Fate has gone many steps further and has decided Draco and Harry will host a soul mate bond."

This did surprise Lucius and his eyes gleamed. The possibilities of such a union were endless! "So you really are soul mates," he breathed. He then cleared his throat and studied Severus. "And Harry Potter is actually your nephew?" Severus nodded. "You must tell me the story, old friend. And if that's true, then I know exactly where your nephew is. Or at least where he was twenty minutes ago."

"Where? Where is he?" Draco demanded.

"Diagon Alley was where I last saw Potter. We were told to stay away from him, but I was curious as to why the boy was traveling alone, apparently with no care in the world—Draco? Where do you think you're going?"

Draco looked up from the Floo powder jar, a frown marring his face. "Where do you think I'm going? To get my idiot Gryffindor."
"No son, I have a better idea."
Harry couldn't remember the last time he'd had so many surprises spring up around him, and today the shocks kept coming. He escaped the Order headquarters and away from Dumbledore. He even managed to get to Diagon Alley, no assassination attempts whatsoever. And all that without his handy Invisibility Cloak; surprising him further because Harry could swear he spotted known Death Eaters throughout the day. Most of them, he remembered, were inconspicuous, still in the closet, lower circle Death Eaters, but still Death Eaters just the same. The first time Harry crossed paths with a Death Eater was when he decided to go to Eeylops Owl Emporium to buy Hedwig some treats. As he walked up to the door, a Death Eater walked out. Both wizards froze, immediately recognizing the other as the enemy.

Harry's wand was immediately in his hand, Expelliarmus dripping past his lips. He hesitated at the last second when the man lifted his hand slowly to raise his hat. And before Harry could blink, the Death Eater ducked to the side and down an alley way. And that was all any of the Death Eaters did. They would only nod and be on their merry Death Eater way.

"What the bloody fuck is going on here?" Harry finally yelled when he had enough Death Eater spotting. No one answered but he received some glares, a few anxious looks, and more than enough pity stares to make up for the silence.

It was as he was crossing the road to Flourish and Blotts when he spotted Malfoy. At least he thought it was Draco's father. But the man Harry saw had simply nodded and turned away, gone in the blink of an eye. Harry didn't care who had done it previously, he refused to believe Lucius Malfoy would merely acknowledge him, Harry Potter, and then skip away without firing a single curse.

"Then it couldn't have been Malfoy I saw in Diagon Alley," he murmured sometime later as he leisurely made his way to the ice cream parlor. "Of course it wasn't. I don't have my glasses so it could have been anyone with blond hair. Yeah."

"No, Potter. You were right, that was me," Lucius said from behind him. Harry spun around, his wand already drawn. Unfortunately Lucius was ready for that and easily took Harry's wand away. "There. Now we can be sure not to have any accidents while we have a chat. Shall we go?"

"I'm not going anywhere with-" Lucius pulled Harry into a one armed hug and immediately Apparated before Harry had a chance to move away.

Harry wasn't scared. He wasn't even worried. And when they arrived in an Entrance Hall of some unknown place, he wasn't even nervous. Harry was furious.

"Where the hell are we? Why have you brought me here?" Lucius ignored him and walked away. "Hey!" Harry felt queer indeed, standing in the center of a strange brilliantly lit Entrance Hall.

He looked around and found a plaque on the wall describing the house as Snape Manor. Oh, perfect! Sighing, Harry followed the path Lucius took. There was really nothing else Harry could do, as
Lucius still had his wand. As he quickly followed after Malfoy, he felt Lucius' son battering at the wall he constructed to keep him out. Strangely it was a comforting feeling, knowing Draco was still there, trying to get through his stubborn shields. But even so, his choice had been made. He would remain alone. It was for Draco's protection as much as it was for his.

Harry found Lucius in a study just off the main hall. The house elves must have been in earlier, as the large fireplace was brightly lit with a roaring fire. Personally, Harry thought it was too warm to need a fire.

"Here, Potter. A drink." The older wizard handed him a short glass with a liquid the color of dark amber. Harry took it but in no way planned to drink it.

"What are we doing here, Mr. Malfoy?" Harry watched the older wizard carefully. He didn't care that he was staring rather rudely, Lucius assumed.

"Mr. Potter, please have a seat and try to relax. I assure you, danger will not seek you here." Lucius gracefully lowered himself down into a large comfortable looking black leather sofa, and Harry would have taken the seat under normal circumstances.

"Do you think I'm daft? Of course I'm in danger! I'm always in mortal peril! Ask Trelawney. And if you're here, Mr. Malfoy, Voldemort is not too far behind."

"I give my word as a Malfoy." Lucius raised a hand when Harry quickly opened his mouth. "However, for whatever reason that will not work with you, I could always return your wand to you…"

Harry's mouth snapped shut. "As long as you swear not to use it against me."

"I won't if you won't."

"Bargain struck, then." Lucius tossed Harry's wand back and Harry snatched it out of the air and began checking to make sure it wasn't counterfeit. When he found he was holding his own wand, a quick spell later told him the drink wasn't poisoned. It seemed Lucius wasn't planning on killing him that way then. Harry downed his drink before sitting down in a chair facing his kidnapper.

"Why am I here then?"

"I'm a messenger of sorts, I suppose." Lucius leaned back and crossed his legs.

"From your master?" Harry sneered. Lucius ignored his attitude and sipped his drink.

"No, I'm afraid he's far too busy to fit you into his plans." Harry snorted, though he paid attention to every word. "I've seen my son today. We had an interesting talk."

"What have you done with him?" Harry, in his usual hasty fashion, jumped up and pointed his wand at Lucius' face. "Tell me what you've done to Draco right now, or I will-"

"Nothing has been done to Draco. Do you honestly think I would hurt my own son?"

"He had to run from you, didn't he?" Harry spat.

"That was a ruse. I wanted to protect my son. From many. I had Severus secret him away so that he wouldn't be ordered to join the Death Eaters against his will. Draco has no desire to grovel at my Lord's feet."

Harry blinked, slowly processing that. "Where is he then?"
"Back with your Order, with that crackpot Dumbledore. Apparently the old fool had a last minute brainstorm and found use for Draco. He's had the opportunity to use Draco before now, knowing Draco was with Severus. I wonder why suddenly he wants to use my son when he hadn't before. Have you any idea, Potter?" Lucius was watching Harry's reaction carefully and as always was astounded by the emotions flying across the young wizard's face. "You really should try and hide your emotions more, Potter. I intend to see that you get the proper training for a pureblood."

Harry fell back into his seat and gripped at his hair in frustration. He knew perfectly well why Dumbledore suddenly had an interest in Draco. It was the bond. Dumbledore had been there at Headquarters. Seen things... he would use Draco to trap him more.

"I have to go get him. We can't leave him for Dumbledore."

"Not playing the puppet anymore, I see. That's good." Yes, Lucius was pleased indeed. With Harry by his son's side, the Malfoy family would gain even more power and support. And as he'd told Draco, there was great potential inside of Potter.

"Do you have any idea where Draco is? Maybe you should contact Snape. He might know something." Am I really having this conversation with Lucius Malfoy?

"I know more than something." And there was Severus gliding in as if his world had not been thrown upside down. "I trust you were a suitable babysitter, Lucius?"

"Of course, Severus. And Potter has given me much to think about."

"Excuse me?" Harry rounded on his uncle. "Professor? You told Lucius, the number one Death Eater, to baby-sit me? Have you lost your mind?"

"I'll have you know," Severus said with a sniff of disdain, and accepted his drink from Lucius. "That I am the number one Death Eater. Lucius, you come a close second."

"I don't think so, old friend. The Dark Lord clearly considers me his right hand man..."

Harry stood with his arms crossed over his chest, looking down at Severus and Lucius as they bickered back and forth about who was the Number One Death Eater. Harry's mouth was understandably hanging wide open.

"Hello? Have you seriously forgotten about Draco? I can't believe you left him with Dumbledore, Professor!"

"Draco was supposed to go on his mission, but unfortunately for the Order, young Mr. Malfoy disappeared en route. Sad really." Severus smirked at his nephew. Harry started to chew his bottom lip. He wanted to know Draco was safe, but he didn't want to take the wall around his mind down in case Draco was waiting for that. "Sit down, Harry." Severus gently pushed Harry towards the chair, relieved when Harry did sit. Then he turned back to Lucius. "You'll want to make your way home now. I'm expecting," Severus scowled at Harry, "unwelcome visitors."

"Yes. I'm not quite ready for that." Lucius nodded at both Harry and Severus, and then quickly left the study.

Severus settled back and studied his scowling nephew. This morning, Severus planned to go to Grimmauld Place and discuss Lily and the journal with Harry, but the Dark Lord called him before he left Hogwarts. And now he could see how angry Harry had become because he hadn't come back in time. Did the boy actually believe he wouldn't want to pursue the relationship they should have always had? If he did, then Potter was an idiot, just like his father.
"Did you have fun today, Harry? All by yourself, with no protection?"

"Yes, thank you. It was quite refreshing." Severus' brows rose. Clearly Draco was rubbing off on Harry. "And enlightening. Did you know the Death Eaters have stopped coming after me?"

"Yes I did know. That is why I wasn't able to meet with you before now." Harry started to scowl again. "The Dark Lord called me to him. I had no choice but to go." It was a valid excuse, but Severus could see Harry wasn't ready to hear it. So they would discuss it another day. "Your belongings are being brought here as we speak, as is Miss Granger's and Draco's. You will not be staying here, as Dumbledore will have access to you here. For the time being the Leaky Cauldron will have to do."

"He could get to us there as well."

"Perhaps, but all he could do there is talk to you. It's too public a place for him to try anything."

"Try anything? This is Dumbledore we're talking about. What would he do?" Severus stared steadfast into his nephew's eyes.

"Are you ready for more truths, Harry?"

"I've been ready since I was one years old."

"Good. We'll talk more about this tonight after dinner. You should go find the Floo Room. You're friends will be arriving soon." Severus waved a hand towards the door, but was no longer looking at him.

"Fine. I'll go." He dragged his feet, but he did go looking for the Floo Room. Too bad Uncle Sevvy forgot to tell him where that was. Which meant Harry easily got lost, and he was sure nearly fifteen minutes had passed since he started his search. He wondered how Snape had managed to get such a grand Manor. He would have never found the Floo Room if he hadn't been passing it at the exact same time Sirius came hurtling out of it, running into Harry, causing both of them to go down in a tangle of limbs.

"Harry!" Part of the limb mound spoke.

"Hello Padfoot," answered the other part.

"Harry!" Fred and George came bounding out of the room and helped Harry and Sirius up.

"Thanks guys." He grinned at the twins and hugged each of them, truly happy to see them. "Sirius, you really should watch where you're going?"

"Look who's talking! What did you think you were doing leaving headquarters like that?"

"I just went for a walk…" Harry shrugged.

"Well you could have left a note for Draco at least. He went insane!"

"Draco's here?" Harry squinted into the Floo Room, and relaxed when he only saw Remus, Ginny, and Hermione brushing off their clothes and gathering Hermione's trunk and bags.

"Yes, he's here." Harry tensed, and was so terrified of seeing Draco, that he actually prepared to run away. "He arrived with Snape. Haven't you seen him yet?"

"No. I only saw Snape and Lucius Malfoy."
"Lucius Malfoy?" Fred leaned forward. "He still here?"

"What did the sexy Death Eater want?" George piped in, but Harry was only seeing Sirius, who suddenly looked like he wanted to run away now.

"He's gone. Apparently Voldemort wants nothing to do with me at the moment. I don't know, but I think I'm slightly offended by that."

"Seriously? Snape was telling the truth?"

"Yeah, I'll tell you about it at dinner." Harry then went into the Floo Room. "Hermione, Ginny, could you come here for a minute?" he asked as he went to stand in a corner. He wanted the wall to his back so that he could see if Draco came anywhere near him. He was not as oblivious as people thought he was. Harry knew that he wouldn't be able to resist Draco at all if he got within touching distance.

The two witches smiled tentatively and approached him. He smiled and reached out to grab both girls' hands. "How are you two?" he asked. Hermione stared at her friend in surprise. She remembered the last time she'd seen his eyes so clear and bright. It was the end of their third year, which seemed so long ago now. She couldn't help but cry and throw her arms around him.

"Oh Harry! I'm fine. How are you? I missed you so much!"

Harry smiled into his friend's hair, "I'm loads better now." Someone cleared a throat, and Harry opened his other arm. Ginny nearly tackled them to the ground with her happy dramatics when she flew into the hug.

"Oh, hey Draco!" Fred yelled from the hallway. Harry pulled away from his friends so fast that they did tumble to the floor.

"Harry, what's wrong?" Hermione asked from lying on her back.

"Harry's in the Floo Room," George said helpfully. Then Harry heard him whisper dramatically to Fred, "Ooh! He looks fit to kill."

"Harry? What's gotten into you?" Ginny pulled herself up on her knees and planted her fists at her hip; even while on her knees, Ginny Weasley was imposing.

But Harry wasn't listening and was already looking for a way to escape, and he thanked all the gods in the universe when he spotted a door in the opposite corner. It was inconspicuous, painted just like the wall and you wouldn't know it was there unless you stopped and looked at the spot for a minute. Harry dashed over and pushed it open and as he did he glimpsed Draco over his shoulder just before he shut the door again and disappeared into the darkness.

Draco came to a halt right outside of the Floo Room and looked in. "I thought you said Harry was in there? I don't see him."

"What do you mean? Harry's right th...ere..." Fred trailed off when he saw he was pointing at an empty corner, with Hermione and Ginny kneeling on the floor. Harry was nowhere to be seen. "Oi, sis! Where'd Harry go?"

"He ran that way, through that door," Ginny muttered, pointing at the semi-hidden door.

"I don't think he wants to see you, Draco," Hermione said gently after picking herself up.
"I don't really give a flying fuck what he wants right now!" Draco ignored the rest of them and flew through the door into a large dark antechamber. A candle was burning on the other side of the room, lighting a narrow passage across the way. Draco quickly scanned the room before running through the door on the other side. He momentarily realized that he was able to see quite well in the dark.

The door led him out into a well-lit hallway and Draco caught sight of Harry out of the corner of his eye. "Harry! Stop!" Of course Harry didn't listen and Draco cursed his soul mate as he took chase after him.

They flew down hallways, past numerous rooms and corridors and Draco's anger was reaching its pentacle. Finally he was just passing a corridor when Harry rounded the corner up ahead, and since Draco was more familiar with Snape Manor, he knew exactly where that hallway would lead Harry, and the corridor he was standing at would get him there in half the time. With a smirk, Draco turned down the corridor, and jogged at a leisurely pace. He would lay in wait for his prey.

Harry slowed to a stop and bent over in front of two large black doors ornamentally covered with large brass leaves; trying to breathe in as much air as possible. What he needed was somewhere to sit and rest and to think of what to do, and how to deal with Draco. He reached a hand out to brace on the doorknob and literally fell past the door as it swung open.

"Dammit…" he mumbled and looked up to see where he was. "Snape has a library huh?" Harry dusted himself off and headed to the darkest corner in the back of the library, and found exactly what he was looking for. A lone chair, which surprisingly had bright red cushions, and completely covered by shadows, was sitting out of sight with a nice little view of the library doors. Harry walked past the last of the bookshelves and stood just in front of the chair and looked at it.

"I know what you're thinking. You're asking yourself why you've become such a coward." Draco's voice touched him like silk, and it made the hairs at the back of Harry's neck stand on end.

"Actually I was thinking this chair doesn't belong in Severus Snape's house." Harry turned around. Draco wasn't standing as near as he'd expected and in a last bout of insanity, Harry belted; jumping over a small table to his left and taking off along the wall. He saw a spot where he could cut across back to the front doors, but just as he was going to turn, Draco tackled him from behind.

"What is wrong with you, Potter?" Draco hissed as he grabbed the back of Harry's collar and stood up, pulling the idiot Gryffindor with him. He then slammed Harry back up against the nearest wall.

They were both breathing hard and rumpled from the exertion. Harry had never seen Draco look more gorgeous than he was looking right that moment. His normally pale face was flushed, and his furious eyes were blazing silver, capturing Harry in a mental cage where there was no escape, and Harry found himself not caring because Draco's hair was sexy out of place, strands falling over his eyes down to his jaw, some sticking out all over the place. And his lips were wet and parted, and Harry just wanted to….

No! I can't do this!

"What?" Draco yelled. "What can't you do, Harry? Tell me why I had to chase your arse all over the place. Explain why you've been keeping me out of your mind!" He pushed Harry back again with some force while the hurt he was feeling flashed into his eyes, stunning Harry. "I'd like to know why you don't think you can have anything to do with me."

Harry was shaking his head. He didn't want to hurt Draco, but he had no other choice. "I can't deal
with this right now! We can't continue the bond or connection, or whatever it is that's wrong with us."

"And why are you telling me this? Did you forget I could feel your mind and soul? I know you want this… don't you understand what's going on between us? Don't you understand what it means?"

"I can't do it! Not right now, okay? I have to concentrate on Voldemort, one way or another, and I can't handle the added pressure. I can't be directly responsible for another person I care about. Getting close to anyone would be a mistake, for me and for them."

Harry's eyes begged Draco to understand, but the Slytherin's anger only increased. He took another step forward till they were only a breath apart with the heat swelling around their bodies. "Get over yourself, Potter," he hissed, the frightening familiar sneer spreading across his face. "You honestly think you're the only one with problems? You're so full of yourself you think you are the only one to have people relying on you-

"What the hell do you know about it?" Harry eagerly accepted this change in dynamics between them. It was old, familiar, and easy to navigate around. Draco would get so angry he'd leave on his own, and he wouldn't want to be anywhere near Harry again. It would hurt a lot less if they hated each other again. "Since when do you care about helping anyone but yourself, huh? What did Dumbledore have to promise in order for you to be here?"

Draco sucked in an enraged breath and his eyes flashed in fury. "Fucking bastard! Do you honestly think I would go to someone like Dumbledore? I'm here because of you, you fucked up Gryffindor!"

The following moments were spent in absolute silence; neither of them knew what to say to that. Draco's anger was suddenly spent in the wake of his words. He was appalled with himself. That had been too close to a declaration for his liking. He wasn't really quite ready for that.

Draco tried to calm himself so that he could think calmly, like Malfoys were supposed to, and that's when he realized Harry was covering something up. Draco pinned Harry with a hard stare and concentrated all his attention on what Harry was feeling. They were so close he was able to get passed Harry's mental wall. He immediately relaxed when he found what he was looking for.

Harry was trying to move to the side and go around, but Draco slammed his hand into the wall beside Harry's head, startling the Gryffindor. He quite liked the squeak leaving Harry's mouth then. "You're afraid," Draco said softly.

"W-what?" Harry's voice was a hoarse whisper.

"I never counted you for a coward."

Harry bristled with anger. "Don't you fucking talk like you know me! You don't! No one does! I don't even know how the hell you can expect me to drag you down along side me? I don't want you hurt, Draco! I can't let myself be hurt…" Harry turned his head away to keep Draco from seeing the tears. He'd been doing that a lot lately, crying. "I can't get more involved. I know that sounds completely selfish of me, but I may not survive being alone if you left for some reason…"

"Harry, look at me." When Harry's eyes focused on him he smiled. "I know people you love and trust have let you down a lot. I understand why you wouldn't want to go through that again, to be afraid to get close again. But you don't have to worry about that with me. I'm not going anywhere without you, I swear it. We'll go slow if that's what it will take to keep you from running from us. And there is an us, Harry." He raised a hand to caress Harry's jaw and smiled when Harry immediately relaxed. "Do you believe me?"
Merlin, Harry thought, how could I do anything else? "You are not being fair… Yes, as strange as that is-" he broke off when Draco shifted closer, bringing their bodies flush against each other.

"You're mine."

"W-what?" his green eyes were clouded and he hitched his hips forward more in order to feel Draco's arousal against his.

Draco laughed softly. "I thought you wanted to go slow."

Harry started shaking his head. "I never said anything about going slow."

Pleased by his response, Draco nuzzled the side of Harry's face and then allowed his lips to follow his fingers across Harry's jaw and down to the hollow of his neck. Harry moaned again and let his head fall back against the wall.

"No, Harry. I want your eyes open and looking at me when you answer," Draco commanded.

Harry slowly opened his eyes and tried blinking the clouds of lust away. "Did you ask something?"

"I was asking you to be mine. It really doesn't matter if you say no. I'll only change your mind. I was only being polite by asking first. I have no wish to go chasing after you again."

"Merlin, Draco. Doesn't anyone ever tell you no?"

"You're the only one with the audacity who has."

Harry's eyes had cleared by now, and Draco was staring intently into them. They were the most brilliant shade of green Draco had ever seen. He was lost in Harry's expressive eyes; floating lazily along, content to bask in his gaze. Harry must have felt exactly what Draco was feeling and thinking because his eyes suddenly brightened further and Harry was the one to shift and touch Draco next. He lifted his hand, brushing his fingers lightly over Draco's shoulder to rest at his neck just over the pulse point. His eyes dilated further when he felt the blood pumping underneath his touch.

"If you kiss me maybe I'll say yes," Harry whispered shyly, staring at Draco's chin. His eyes then flicked up to Draco while his cheeks darkened under his stare. The Slytherin grinned, drawing a slow pleased smile from Harry in reaction. Harry began to finger the back of Draco's neck, playing with the strands of white blond hair. Draco's hair was softer than he imagined. When the blond made no other movement, Harry gripped the back of Draco's neck and pulled Draco's face closer to kiss him.

Draco took immediate advantage of Harry's parted lips and opened his to explore, to dominate. When Harry eagerly accepted Draco, they were both instantly lost; Taken over by some primal need to be closer, to touch and be touched, to feel the heat from self made friction, and the pleasure they could make with each other.

After a time, Harry pulled his head away with a gasp, in need of air. "Why have we never done this before?" he managed to ask just before Draco moved to his neck, wrapping an arm around Harry's back, bringing the brunet closer to him.

Harry clung to Draco; never having felt so needed before, so hot, and thinking it didn't matter why they had never snogged senselessly before. They were doing it now and if there was a god out there who loved him, Harry wouldn't have to stop touching and kissing Draco any time soon.

Then Draco's lips were on his again and his hands were on his hips, sliding down to grip his thighs.
Harry shifted to wrap his legs around Draco's waist and they gasped simultaneously at the contact.

At the library door, five people stood watching the scene they'd met when investigating the open door. Ginny and Hermione arrived first and stood stone still watching as Harry and Draco devoured and touched each other as if they were obsessed. It was difficult to not be affected by the sheer power of lust and desire radiating from the young wizards' every movement.

"Ginny…" Hermione whispered in soft awe.

"Yeah, I know. Hot."

"Never took you for a voyeur, Hermione."

Hermione shrieked and jumped two feet in the air. "Sirius! You scared me."

"Blast! They've stopped!" Ginny cried. She spun around to glare at Sirius, the one responsible for interrupting Harry and Draco's love fest. "Besides, if Mione's a voyeur, than so is everyone else. The three of you have been here for at least five minutes without saying anything."

"I had no problem watching. Draco and Harry looked very happy wrapped up in each other. You don't often see either of them happy, after all."

"Sure, Moony, whatever. I was watching because it was turning me on," Sirius confessed, and grinned unapologetically.

"Excuse me?" Draco yelled, pissed off that the moment was ruined and Harry was now trying to hide in the corner behind him. Draco could feel the heat of Harry's blush on his back where Harry's cheek was pressed against it. It was a good feeling knowing Harry was looking for protection from him in any way. It was also cute, Harry huddling behind him, fingers gripping on to the back of his robe.

"I was simply curious as to how far they would try to go right here in the middle of my library," Severus put in.

"I would appreciate it if you could all leave!" Draco commanded, not at all pleased that he was being ignored.

"No, Draco. It's fine. I'm going to go lay down, okay?"

Draco hesitated before nodding; knowing Harry still needed a lot of bed rest. "Don't forget to take the nutrient potions before you go to sleep."

Harry nodded, and before he could be stopped by anyone else, a red-faced Harry Potter bolted from the library, shaking his head when Sirius and Ginny leered at him as he passed. Draco huffed and threw himself into the closest chair. Moments later he started to glare at nothing in particular.

"Aren't you going to go after him?" Draco turned and glared at Remus, who stared back curiously.

"No, Harry's embarrassed. He wants to be alone right now and he really does need to sleep." And the glaring continued.

"Well… Wow, Draco! I would pay good money I don't have to see what you two were just doing again. Care to set a time and date?" Ginny asked, excitedly taking a seat next to him. Draco barely cracked a smile at her, though he did find it funny. And perhaps it was something to look into. He and Harry had plenty of money, but it couldn't hurt to have more. And making it would be fun…
hmm?

No!

At least think about it?

No, Draco! The glare turned into a manly pout.

"Ginny!"

"Oh stop pretending to be scandalized, Mione. You forget I know all your dirty little fantasies." Ginny leered at her friend.

"Shut your mouth right now, Ginevra Weasley!" Hermione glared from where she sat on the rug in front of the fire. She was relieved to see Severus, Sirius, and Remus had removed themselves to another part of the library and were not within hearing distance.

"Whoa, Granger," and Draco said this in friendly amusement, his pouting forgotten again. "Must be some kinky fantasies." Draco knew he wouldn't get anything out of Hermione, so he turned to Ginny for examples.

"Yes, especially one involving a certain Potions Ma-" Ginny's eyes widened in shock when she realized she had just been cursed with the silencing spell. Draco leaned forward in rapidly growing glee.

"Hermione! You want Severus? Oh, Merlin!" he exclaimed when she blushed. "You want Severus Snape! Brilliant! This ought to pull Harry out of his cocoon of embarrassment."

If Draco didn't look so happy, Hermione would have cursed him. And there would have been blood loss. "Malfy," she started slowly, rising to her feet and advancing upon him like a stalking cat. "If you so much as utter a word to Harry, or anyone else for that matter, I swear I will chop off your hair and-" Draco jumped up and away just as a shriek of horror echoed throughout half the manor.

"Oops. Too late," Ginny laughed after Draco had been so kind to Finite the spell. She needn't have bothered saying anything. They knew the yell they heard came from Harry.

"Malfy! You bastard!"

"Sorry Granger. I'd like to stay and have that chat with you about the Draught of Peace—you should have some, by the way—but I really must be going!" He was heading out the door before he'd even finished speaking.

With one victim gone, Hermione turned to the second victim, only to find Ginny had scampered as well. "Bye Hermione! I love you!" Ginny waved and disappeared into the hallway.
Accusations and Revelations

Life Renovations

Chapter Nine

Accusations and Revelations

The library was silent as Severus, Remus, and Sirius hunted for more information on soul mate bonds. There wasn't much information to be found because those types of bonds were incredibly rare.

"Is the extent of the bond known to Dumbledore?" Remus asked once he finished looking through the book in front of him.

"Only that it's a bond. And a strong one at that," Severus replied, pulling his eyes away from a book about magical bonds. "He knows nothing about it being a soul mate bond."

"That could be useful, him not knowing they have all the abilities of a soul mate bond."

"Yes, I agree…I've decided to talk to Harry about Dumbledore tonight, will you be present?" Sirius and Remus confirmed with a nod.

"When should we tell them about the bond?"

"They will have to do with the knowledge that they are in fact soul mates for the time being. I think it best to wait until we've gathered all the information we can before telling them anything else. It shouldn't be too hard to determine which bond it is. There are only three soul mate bonds after all. Draco is already exhibiting certain traits relating to one of the bonds. We should wait until there is more evidence of a specific bond."

"He's already displaying?" Remus looked up in time to see Severus nod.

"Yes, which must mean Draco's power will increase by a large percent when Harry's Inheritance comes to him."

"You think the bond is equaling up their powers, Snape?" questioned Sirius.

"Yes."

Remus leaned back and rubbed his eyes. "This could be a problem…"

"Certainly, if it's the bond I think it is." Severus moved the book around to allow Remus and Sirius view of it. Their eyes widened. "I think it would be wise to prepare them for this as soon as possible."

"Merlin…" Sirius whispered, staring at the words written across the page.

"Definitely as soon as possible. Harry's birthday is less than two weeks away," Remus agreed.

"So let's tell them tonight. We're already going to be talking about Dumbledore, might as well give them the news then, right?"
"Black, I was under the impression you cared for your godson…"

"Of course I do, Snivellus!"

"Then for once think with your head, mutt! Firstly, we don't know for sure it is this bond," Severus said tapping a finger against the open book page. "Secondly, after everything Harry has been through, and will go through after our talk with him tonight, do you really think it wise to lay this on him as well so soon? I think we should see how he reacts tonight before telling him anything else. But if you want to send him into another magical coma, then by all means, please, tell him tonight."

"Fine, Snape. You've made your point. All you had to say was not a good time. That's all!"

"I wanted to make sure the point got through your thick skull," Severus ended with a smirk while Sirius growled.

"Right then," Remus stood and stretched. "We should gather Harry and the others and get to the Leaky Cauldron. Fred and George had to leave for their shop and agreed to secure rooms and a private dining room for us on their way. Everything should be ready now."

Severus snapped his fingers and a house elf popped in. "Yes, Master?"

"Merry, have the young persons in the house return to the library and send their luggage ahead to the Leaky Cauldron."

"Right away, sir!" And the elf popped out again.

"Better not let Hermione see your elves," Remus cautioned with a little knowing smile. Severus scowled at him.

"I'm not afraid of Miss Granger's S.P.E.W. campaign. She'll have to come to terms with the fact that she will never get anywhere with it."

"You won't say that when she gets her claws into you."

Severus ignored this and began rounding up the books. Not long after, the young wizards and witches returned to the library.

"Took you long enough!" Severus said coming to stand in front of them. Harry looked up, and his eyes looked wet, like he'd been crying.

"Sorry, sir." Severus realized those were tears of mirth. Harry, Ginny, and Draco looked at him, and then Hermione, before they all started to laugh. Everyone except Hermione. If looks could kill they'd all be dead.

"And what is so amusing? Miss Granger?"

"It's n-nothing, sir! They just have problems letting things go!" Her voice trembled with fury.

"It's okay, Mione." Harry, being the only one Hermione would not curse, stood next to her and squeezed her hand. She huffed angrily, but was happy to hold her best friend's hand, and shot a satisfied grin at Draco, who didn't look very happy about his soul mate holding somebody else's hand. Never mind Harry was gay. Then again, it was Draco's own fault as he chose to stand as far away from Hermione as possible, which meant Ginny stood between him and Harry.

"It's time to go to the Leaky Cauldron." Snape looked down his nose at Ginny and Hermione.
"Things will be said tonight that must be kept from Dumbledore. Can you two do that?"

The girls looked at each other, silent words flying between them. And then Hermione nodded and Ginny smiled.

"We've never fought for Dumbledore, Professor. We stand by Harry," Ginny said, throwing her arm around Harry's waist with a quick cheeky wink at Draco, who promptly leaned over and pried her arm off his lovely wizard.

"It's always been for Harry, Professor Snape," spoke Hermione, her little pixie nose stuck in the air.

"Good. Let's go."

Harry was silent on the way to the Floo Room, but couldn't help feel humbled by Ginny and Hermione's show of loyalty. He didn't think he deserved it.

The group of seven arrived at the Leaky Cauldron by Floo and was immediately shown to the dining parlor.

"Thanks, Tom," Harry told the bald innkeeper after he led them in.

"Anything for you, Mr. Potter. All you have to do is ask…" Tom flashed a toothless grin and disappeared around the corner.

"Oh yes, Mr. Potter! Anything for you. Perhaps you'd like me to lick the bottom of your boots for you?" Draco did a very good rendition of old Tom the barkeep.

"Git." Harry playfully pushed Draco out in front of him. As he pulled his hand back, Draco grabbed his arm, letting his fingers trail slowly down until their fingers connected and entangled together. Draco didn't say a word; he didn't even look at Harry, but the simple act of catching Harry's hand without trying to make it obvious really touched Harry and by the time they sat down at the table, he had the sweetest smile on his face and was blushing madly. No one bothered to point it out. It was obvious by the way Draco was smirking he was responsible, and everyone was just fine with seeing Harry smile.

Dinner was a relatively silent affair as everyone was hungry, too busy eating to strike up a conversation, at least until dessert was passed around. Harry sighed appreciatively when a plate of Treacle Tart was placed in front of him and immediately began to make the dessert disappear. Everyone was glad to see Harry's appetite return, including snarky Snape; but no one was more relieved than the blond sitting at his side. Harry was too thin. To an unhealthy degree. It scared Draco.

Draco pushed that away when Harry looked at him in worry. Harry, have you told Ginny and Hermione about Uncle Snape yet? he thought as they moved away from the dinner table. There was a private parlor adjacent to the dining room where everyone moved to once the meal finished.

No. I don't know what Professor Snape thinks about that yet. Didn't think he'd want me telling everyone.

You told me.

"That's because you're special and deserve special attention," Harry replied with a grin.

"Finally! Someone who finally gets it! Draco Malfoy deserves all the attention. Thank You, Harry!
"I've been waiting six years to hear you say that!"

"I don't think that's what Harry meant when he said special," Remus whispered to his friend and Sirius snorted.

Fortunately Draco didn't hear this and to show how pleased he was with his soul mate, he pushed Harry against the wall and proceeded to snog him senseless. It only took five seconds before Harry forgot they were in a public hallway and returned Draco's spine tingling ministrations with fervor.

"Was Draco talking about himself in the third person?" Hermione asked when she came out into the hallway.

"Mmm hmm…Harry did say…Draco is special."

If Ginny was acting more like Luna Lovegood then herself right then, it didn't seem to bother her because she really wasn't paying much attention to anything except the gorgeous couple snogging against the wall. Hermione rolled her eyes and grabbed Ginny's arm, pulling the younger girl down the hall. And if Hermione's eyes strayed longer than necessary on Harry and Draco, no one could see to point it out.

"I knew he had a complex," Hermione muttered, pulling Ginny into the parlor.

"Oi! There's an owl!" Sirius yelled from the hallway. Hermione stuck her head out and spotted the large tawny barn owl swooping into the hallway. Draco pulled away from Harry just in time for the owl to swoop down between them and land at their feet.

"You expecting a letter, Harry?"

"No." Harry studied the owl. "The owl is facing you. Must be yours."

Draco bent to pick up the letter while Harry desperately tried to fix his hair. No need to announce to the world, 'On my way to shagging.' It was always a fruitless effort. Draco shooed the owl away and put the letter in his pocket without looking at it. They joined hands again and followed Sirius and Remus into the parlor. Severus was last to enter; staying behind to cast multiple spells around the parlor, ensuring the imminent discussion would not be overheard.

The Leaky Cauldron's private parlor was set up much like the Gryffindor common room; only it was a quarter the size. A small fire burned in the cobblestone fireplace; the fire was more for light then heat. A pitcher of pumpkin juice, with seven glasses, and an assortment of biscuits lay on a platter atop a long wooden coffee table in the center of the room, with a sofa and two chairs spread around it.

"Everyone quiet down and sit!" Severus snapped. "There is much to discuss and I don't want to be here all night."

Remus and Severus took chairs while Draco, Sirius, and Ginny sat on the couch across from them. Although conjuring chairs would have been easy for Harry and Hermione, they were happy to sit on the floor; Harry between Draco's legs, his back resting against the sofa and Hermione used Ginny's legs as a back prop.

Harry looked around and finally realized what had been nagging him all through dinner. "Where are Fred and George? Aren't they supposed to be here?"

"They had to go back to their shop," Remus answered. "They will learn tomorrow what we discuss tonight." He looked at Severus, seeking confirmation. The Potions Master nodded his agreement.
Harry relaxed back against the sofa. He wrapped an arm around Draco's leg and pressed his cheek against the side of Draco's knee, surprising himself by doing so, but couldn't really care less by how fast things were moving between him and Draco. It felt so right. Especially when Draco started running fingers through his hair. Harry closed his eyes, blocking out the world, and began purring in contentment. It wasn't until Draco stopped petting him did he notice something was odd. When his eyes opened, everyone was silent and looking at him oddly. He turned and found Draco also staring, an indescribable look in his eyes.

"What?" he looked around. "Did somebody ask me something?"

"You were purring, Harry," Sirius told him, looking between his godson and Draco.

"I'm sorry. Didn't mean to cause a distraction. Draco, you'll have to stop petting me."

Ginny giggled when Draco looked about ready to pout at that. Clearly he was enjoying petting Harry and hearing the purring.

"No, it's not that, Harry." Harry frowned at the amusement in Hermione's voice. "It's just that…. you really were purring. A real purr; a sound that can't be made by the human vocal chords." Harry looked at her strangely.

"Hermione, I just made the sound. Obviously it can be done with a human voice box or I wouldn't have done it."

The three adult wizards exchanged meaningful looks with one another before Severus cleared his throat, catching every one's attention. "Can we begin now?"

"Are you sure it's safe to do this here?" Sirius asked.

"I assure you my wards will keep out anyone and anything unless they are clear to pass the wards. We will not be overheard." This seemed to relieve some tension they were all feeling. "I would like to start by assuring you again, Harry, you don't have to worry about going back to the Dursleys, even though it's nearly seventeen years too late."

"As long as I don't have to return there, I really don't care."

"Dumbledore did not have the right to make the Dursleys your guardians. He did that on his own."

"He didn't have the right? Then how could he send Harry there?"

"Dumbledore was the only one to see the Potters last will and testament, Miss Granger. Right after your parents' deaths, Harry, Black was sent to Azkaban…"

"That was convenient," Draco muttered.

"Yes, and therefore he was unable to contest to the will. Dumbledore claimed the Dursleys were named in the will somewhere along the lines."

"Dumbledore had the power to get me a trial, to get me out of Azkaban, but I never saw him the entire time I was in."

"Surely he must have tried something to help you."

"No, Miss Granger. Sirius Black was sent to Azkaban on Dumbledore's orders."

The silence was terrible; everyone except the Animagus was looking at Severus as if he'd lost his
"Can't say that surprises me," Sirius finally said.

Harry jumped to his feet. His teeth were bared, his eyes wildly violent. He had to force his hands into his pockets to keep from lashing out at something. "Well I'm fucking surprised! When did you find this out, Snape? Fifteen years ago?" he shouted.

Draco put a calming hand on the small of Harry's back and was relieved when Harry seemed to calm down a bit, though he did continue to stand.

"Harry, it was impossible for Severus to have known back then. I don't think anyone knew," Remus explained quietly. "I certainly hadn't. Otherwise I would have tried to do something."

"How did you find this out?"

"I am a spy, am I not?"

Harry scowled and began pacing. Was it truly Dumbledore's fault Sirius went to Azkaban for all those years? Could the headmaster really have done that to someone? He had to know. "If he did, why?"

Severus looked at him, narrowing his eyes slightly. "I think you know the answer to that. It's the same reason why he suddenly wanted to use Draco. You. He was using you from the very beginning, Harry. He wanted someone around to deflect all the attention off himself and his goals. The Dark Lord walked right into his trap when he hit you with the killing curse. No one thought twice about where Dumbledore was during all this when they were too busy celebrating you."

"He wanted people to know about me, yet kept me hidden away."

"Yes, and people never stopped wondering about you because you disappeared as well," Draco concluded. Harry stopped pacing, his face full of dark shadows.

"He kept me at the Dursleys so that I wouldn't know anything about the Wizarding World. It was so easy to manipulate me when I was eleven. I never questioned him because he made it possible for me to leave the Dursleys by going to Hogwarts. I trusted him because for the first time in my life, I had friends and I was closer than ever before to my mum and dad."

"He filled your mind with prejudices before you put one foot in the school," Severus remarked quietly.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, he sent me Hagrid. I don't think there is anyone more loyal to Dumbledore than he is."

"What do you mean prejudices? Harry has always been opened minded," Hermione blurted out. She wasn't exactly comfortable with where this conversation was going. She knew Dumbledore was no saint, but to accuse him of these things seemed a bit too much.

Harry turned to her, understanding of her thoughts in his eyes. "Oh, Hermione. I met Hagrid and he took me away from the Dursleys and introduced me to a new world. He told me about my parents deaths, their murderer, and I found out Voldemort was a Slytherin... He painted nothing but negative pictures of Slytherin in my head...and then Draco was the first wizard I'd ever met," he knew Draco immediately thought about their first meeting in Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions. "I didn't exactly walk away feeling very good about Slytherins then either."
Draco scowled. *It wasn't my intention to sound like a complete git. I was only nervous and that's the only way I knew how to act!* It was really endearing to Harry to know Draco was telling the truth.

*That was a long time ago, Harry soothed. It's obvious my outlook on Slytherins has changed.*

"I don't see how that makes a difference," Hermione stubbornly went on.

"The Sorting Hat wanted to put me in Slytherin. It said I would do well there. But by the time the hat was put on my head, I had horrible thoughts of Slytherin already, and I begged it to put me anywhere else. Slytherin would have provided me with the skills I needed to really kill a Dark Lord. Let's face it, Gryffindor is all well and good, but we literally had to teach ourselves anything related to defense and tactics."

"Yes, you would have done very well in my House. Being in Slytherin would have helped you see through Dumbledore's string pulling sooner. You would have stopped being his puppet, thus causing him complications with his schemes. And believe me, there are many."

"Yeah, well…He may have not wanted trouble, but he's going to get it now."

"Harry, please be reasonable…"

"No, Hermione! I figured it out! I know what he's been doing! Dursley even told me the old man wanted me hurt every summer! No more!" His firm tone commanded that that was the end of it. He tugged at his hair, once, twice, three times. He needed to calm down. Nothing good would come from losing his temper.

*Come sit down.* Harry hesitated a moment before he returned to his seat at Draco's feet. Draco quickly calmed Harry's nerves by running his fingers through his hair. *If you make that sound again, I will not be held responsible for my actions.*

*I really can't help it, Draco.*

*That's just fine.* Draco tugged on Harry's arms until he moved to sit on the sofa in front of Draco. The blond wrapped his arms around his soul mate and pulled him back against his chest. He softly breathed into Harry's ear as he thought, *I know you can't help making noise when my hands are on you.*

*Draco…I think we're supposed to be concentrating. Stop trying to distract me.*

*You need to calm down. It would do none of us any good if you're infamous temper should arise here.* Draco dipped his head and began to softly kiss the back of Harry's neck, glad Harry's hair was thick and fell nearly to his shoulders, hiding from everyone else what he was really doing. *You're so damn sexy, Harry. I've always wanted you.*

Harry bit his lip and shifted. Draco was licking a very sensitive spot just behind his ear and he could feel Draco's erection pressing against his back. *You've- Uh…mmm, Draco…You've always wanted me?* Not, gasp, likely.

*Well all right. Not always. Ever since fourth year though.* Draco was kissing the other side of his neck now, keeping one eye on his godfather, lest Severus figure out what he was doing. He really didn't give a damn if anyone else saw. A quick look to his right told him Ginny was seeing everything, even if she didn't look like she was looking at them.

*Fourth year? Why?* Harry enunciated his question by subtly pressing back against Draco's erection, causing the blond to groan softly in his ear, his fingers digging into Harry's arms.
It was when you went up against the Hungarian Horntail. He thrust his hips forward, soaking in the feel of Harry's pleasure as it brushed his mind to entangle with his own. For the first time ever, I gave a shit what happened to you, and when you called your broom and started to fly, I couldn't keep my eyes off you.

Draco couldn't help himself; he had to touch more of Harry's skin. Slowly sliding his arm from around Harry, Draco dropped his hand into his lap, and then leisurely moved it up and underneath Harry's shirt. For once he was glad Harry was wearing muggle clothes. So much easier to get around. He was already burning with the need for his soul mate, but with that first touch he very nearly lost control of himself. The things he wanted to do to Harry at that moment…

*Draco! You're sending me images! Now is not the time…Merlin, you bastard!*

You like it.

*Wait, Draco, stop! Snape's saying something important.* Harry thanked Merlin for the interruption. He didn't know what would have happened if Draco hadn't stopped throwing those intimate images into his head.

"Miss Granger," Severus went on, his voice strained by his impatience with the witch since he, Lupin, and Black had been arguing with her for the last five minutes. "If you need more proof of Dumbledore's misdoings, perhaps you would like to read this. My mother's writing." He pulled out his mother's journal and slid it down the coffee table to her.

Draco felt the spike of surprise jolt Harry. *What is it?*

*That's the journal Snape's mum wrote. In it she wrote about having my mum, and putting her up for adoption. I would imagine it's very personal for him. And he's letting Hermione read it? I've never known Severus to allow someone to get that close."

"But this is your mother's journal, Professor!"

"Thank you for stating what I've already explained, Miss Granger. I assure you, you'll find more than enough proof in that."

Hermione clutched the book to her chest, staring wide-eyed at Severus, feeling honored that the professor would bestow upon her such an honor.

"You wish to say something else?"

"No, sir! Well, that is to say… Yes! I mean… I'm just going to go…" Hermione stood and pointed up. "To my room. I'm just going to go rest…"

"Mione, just go to your room and read the journal already."

Harry laughed when his friend blushed, but she smiled and quickly fled to her room, pressing the book close to her chest as if it were a part of her. Ginny went with her, thinking the journal was far more interesting then what they were talking about. She'd already had her suspicions about Dumbledore, and now she was more than convinced. No need to stay around any longer. It was difficult having to sit by Harry and Draco and watch them sink further in love. She sighed while leaving the parlor. Someday she'd find her man.

"Am I allowed to inquire as to what was in that journal and why Hermione was holding it like a treasured artifact?" Remus questioned. Severus looked to Harry, and received a blank stare in return.
He sighed. Obviously he was getting no help in that area.

"In that journal my mother kept her secrets, and the secrets of others. One such secret revealed to me that I had a sister. My mother writes that she was forced, for an unknown reason, to give the child up, by Albus Dumbledore."

Severus wouldn't say to the others, but he suspected his mother hadn't had to be persuaded much. She'd never been a good mother, always considered Severus to be a burden, and his father never cared about anything.

"And so Hesper Snape was put up for adoption, and Dumbledore made sure she was never connected to the Snape family again."

Severus had to stop. The more he told of it, the more he thought of Lily, of their connection, known and unknown; and he dwelled on the terrible loss. He looked up and nearly gasped. For a moment he thought he was looking into Lily's eyes and those eyes were filled with understanding. He nearly said something when he realized it was Harry instead of his mother.

"Hesper Snape was from then on known as Lily Evans," Harry continued for him.

Reactions were instantaneous. "What?" Sirius shouted, bounding to his feet. Remus sat shocked, staring open mouthed at the coffee table as if that would provide him with an explanation. Draco, however, remained perfectly composed; he even had a smirk on his face. But inside he was laughing wildly.

After moments of absolutely nothing, Harry rolled his eyes with Severus. Draco was able to stifle his mental laughter, finally. Look at those faces! Black looks like he doesn't know whether to pound Severus or AK himself. This is too good. I'm going to remember this forever. Can we go up to Hermione's room, please Harry? I want to see the look on their faces when they read it.

At least you're enjoying this. Harry ignored the Hermione and Ginny comments.

Oh I am. Almost as much as I enjoyed touching you.

Don't start right now, Draco. Did you hear what he said? Dumbledore was even involved with this. It's like he's been everywhere in my life, even when I wasn't born yet.

Harry...

I know, I know. Get over myself. I got it, Draco.

No, you git! I was just going to say you're right.

Oh.

Yes, you really have had a f*cked up life. I don't envy you at all. Harry laughed. It was just like Draco to be brutally honest. And it did more good for Harry than anything else.

"So, Severus is your uncle, Harry. And you are now technically a pureblood," Remus remarked quietly. Severus had a snarky reply for the werewolf, but Sirius rounded on him first.

"Who cares about that! I can't believe you share Snape's blood, Harry!"

"It's not the end of the world, Padfoot."

"Might as well be!"
"Once again you show us your true lack of intelligence, Black."

"I hate to bring this up, for obvious reasons, but this will complicate matters concerning their bond."

"What do you know about that?" Draco demanded, happy to discuss something that involved him.

"If Harry is a pureblood, chances are your powers, both of you, will increase dramatically. Not only because Harry is very magically gifted, but also because of the bond. It might be very difficult for your bodies to adapt."

"Is that all? You have no more information about the bond? Just that we're soul mates and that we'll get super powers?" Draco asked calmly, though his tone suggested he knew they had more information.

"No, Draco. We have nothing more to tell you about that at this time. But I assure you we've been gathering information and will have something to tell you soon."

"And we'll go search the libraries tomorrow after we visit St. Mungo's." Harry said to Draco, having made his mind up about that earlier in the day.

"St. Mungo's?"

Harry shrugged. "I might as well get my eyesight fixed. I asked Madam Pomfrey the last time I saw her if it were possible and she told me it was. I never knew it could be done or I would have done it ages ago. It's not like I can't afford it."

"I always thought you knew and you just preferred the Gryffindork look." Draco earned himself an elbow in the gut for that, but Remus and Sirius snickered, finding the comment funny.

"Hey! He said Gryffindork. That's insulting you two too, ya know!"

"Pup, I've never been a Gryffindork." Sirius sounded highly insulted.

"Don't worry, Harry. I have." Severus smirked in amusement at Remus.

"You're talking like it's a club or something! Besides how would I have known I could get my eyes fixed? I didn't know anything! I still don't know a lot of things about this world, my world. It doesn't feel right… to not know."

*Harry, I didn't know you felt that way about it.*

*You assumed I didn't care.*

*How was I to know otherwise? It was hard for me to imagine the boy who lived knew nothing about the world he saved. It didn't make sense to me. Draco's arms tightened around Harry when he felt the brunette prepare to leave. I know you now, stupid Gryffindor! It makes sense now. I'll teach you, Harry. I'll teach you everything about the Wizarding World. Anything you want to know, anything that comes to mind. As I said before, you're not alone anymore.*

Harry was staring at the ground, eyes showing the conflict growing inside him. *I do want you to teach me….*

*Then what's wrong? Why do you sound worried?*

Harry stood up, quieting the debate going on between Severus, Sirius, and Remus. He then quickly left the room without a word. It wasn't long before a hand grabbed his shoulder and jerked him to a
stop and pulled until he was facing an irate blond.

"Harry-"

"I didn't want to talk about it in there, like we were," Harry said before Draco could accuse him of running again.

Harry turned back and continued on his way with Draco at his side. The way to the room was walked in silence, and for Draco it was uneasy. Something was bothering Harry, something concerning Draco, and whenever he wasn't viewed as perfect in everybody's eyes, he became quite concerned.

"You really are vain," Harry said, managing to smile in bemusement.

Draco's eyes brightened immediately. "Somebody must be," he returned as he followed Harry into the room. And then he frowned. "I miss my manor. Must we stay here?" he gingerly sat on the bed, grimacing at the state of the perfectly ordinary common class sheets.

Harry ran a hand through his hair. "We'll move once I have my birthday and collect my inheritance. I promise you will like where we go."

"That's more than a week away," Draco grumbled. "You better be worth this, Harry." He wasn't being serious when he said this. He'd never been happier in his life than he was finally being with Harry. It seemed incredible, but he'd always wanted this, and after fourth year, he knew he wanted to have it with Harry.

"Am I?"

Draco pulled his eyes away from the distasteful bedcovers, brows furrowed. "Are you what?"

"Am I worth all this, Draco? Why are you even here, if only for the bond? Haven't you questioned it even once, since this all started?"

"Of course I have. This started for me before the bond even existed, Harry. I thought you knew that."

"I don't understand how that's possible. You hated me! You terrorized me and my friends...you were always happy to put me down. How could your feelings have changed so much?"

"We're soul mates, Harry," the blond said as if that explained everything. Apparently that wasn't what Harry wanted to hear. The brunet scowled and turned his back on Draco, who stood, eyes going wide. "Is this your way of saying you really don't want this? Is that how you think of me? I know you hated me too-"

"No, I never hated you," Harry said quietly, still facing away. "I didn't like you, but I always cared about what you did, about how you said things. I didn't understand why I cared so much about you when I didn't even like you. We've always had a weird relationship, I guess."

Draco walked to where Harry was standing by the window. He touched Harry's arm to get his full attention. Harry's eyes were full of self-doubt when they looked at him. So much that it hurt Draco to see it there.

"I hated you at the end of fifth year. I hated you for taking my father away, and I hated you because I still wanted you. I was enraged because I knew there was nothing that could ever be done about that. And then the summer arrived, my mother left me alone at the manor, I hardly ever saw her or my
father. So I had a lot of time to think about things. To think about what my father has done, and what he did that night at the Ministry. I thought about what I've done, for myself, and what I did to please my father. I didn't like that there was barely anything that I ever did for myself, and I regret doing most of what my father instructed… I spent the rest of my time thinking about you." Draco spoke softly at the end as if hypnotized. He was being pulled into brilliant emerald eyes.

Harry was staring intently at him, listening with every fiber of his being. He moved closer without thought and Draco wrapped his arms around him. "It didn't make sense to hate you. I only ever disliked you when you were acting like an idiot Gryffindor. But at the same time I appreciated that was you at your worst, and I still … liked you. You are everything I always wanted to be. You put everybody before yourself. You should stop that by the way." Harry shivered as Draco spoke softly in his ear. "I've always only ever seen you, not your name, and you... you looked at me, Harry. You went against me. You weren't afraid of me or my name. You challenged me, pushed me to my limits. You're the reason why I finally opened my eyes to the world around me."

Harry was looking at Draco now and finally saw what everyone else did. What he felt in his own heart was reflecting from Draco's silver eyes. "And then we could talk to each other with our minds and feel each other's emotions, and I felt you felt the same for me. I didn't want to take it slow showing you or anyone else how I felt about you. For once, I think maybe Fate wasn't being a bitch to us. Please tell me you feel the same," he begged.

Harry nodded rapidly, eyes wide on Draco's face. He was a little overwhelmed by the euphoria he was feeling. He finally understood who he was looking at. Everything was so clear now. This was his life partner, his mate. Draco really was his soul mate. Never in his life did he think he'd ever find his soul mate. He'd never even contemplated soul mates before. The chances of anyone ever finding one's soul mate was one in a billion. Not worth thinking about. In fact he'd begun to think he would never find anyone at all to share his life with. And now here he was, in the arms of the wizard whom he had fallen for the previous year and who basically just admitted he was in love with Harry. He had no words to express what he was feeling, he shook with the sheer amount of emotion. However, by the triumphant grin on Draco's face Harry knew his feelings were already known.

But Harry wanted to show Draco how he felt so he leaned closer to him, breath ghosting over Draco's lips, their gazes locked. As he pressed his lips against Draco's he wondered how often he'd dreamt of those lips. How many times had he daydreamed about those lips moving against his like they were right now? Harry's hands moved across Draco's shoulders and up into his hair. This time it was Draco who emitted a loud purr as Harry licked and nipped at Draco's lips, seeking to gain entrance. They didn't stop at the purr, only relished in the feeling the vibrations caused both of them as it traveled from down their chests to their groins.

Harry thrust his hips against Draco, causing the taller boy to gasp and Harry's tongue invaded the blond's mouth. Their tongues wove a slow teasing dance; meeting and then retreating before coming together again for an intimate embrace. Draco deepened the kiss, moving his hands down to grip Harry's hips. He barely noted his hands were shaking. I can barely think around you, Harry. You make me lose my mind. The kiss deepened further, the innocence of it turning into something more. I want you closer! I want... can I?

"Yes." Harry had barely spoken before Draco recaptured his mouth and felt Draco's hands dive under his shirt, fingers running over his abs, across his chest, ghosting over his nipples. Harry gasped and bucked against Draco.

Draco pulled his hands away and ripped Harry's shirt off over his head, throwing it across the room before latching onto Harry's neck, his tongue driving Harry wild with a need so great he thought it might shatter him. He felt himself moving, Draco pushing him back towards the bed. When he fell
onto his back, he pulled Draco with him, and their lips crashed together once more.

Harry's reactions were driving Draco mad. It was clear Harry hadn't much experience, if any at all, and that made Draco dizzy with need. He reveled in every surprised gasp and pleasured moan leaving Harry's mouth. The darkening of Harry's eyes and his swollen lips. The way the brunette arched under his hands, aching to be touched more and more. A deep rumbling noise emitted from Draco's chest as he watched all this and when he'd had enough watching, he lowered his head, growling lowly, to bite at Harry's neck; eyes drifting closed when Harry whimpered under him, rolling his head and baring more of his neck. Draco was so into Harry that he didn't notice the tingling of his teeth as he set about marking Harry's neck.

In the hallway, Remus and Severus were standing outside the closed door, having just come from the parlor where they left Sirius still pouting over Harry's relationship with Snape.

"Those are some very odd noises they are making, wouldn't you say, Severus?"

"Yes. It's clear we now know the identity of their bond."

They listened for another moment to the high-pitched purrs and the guttural moans coming from within the room.

"Do you think we should go in there and stop them?"

"They should be stopped, yes. But I have no intention of going in there until they are separated." Severus looked pointedly at Remus, who backed away shaking his head.

"It's not going to be me. You're Draco's godfather and Harry's uncle. If anyone's going to go in there, it should be you!"

"Grow a backbone, werewolf! Harry will react better if you go in!"

Remus was shaking his head when Harry shouted, "Fuck, Draco! Why are your robes still on? Stop the fucking torture right now and take your robes off!"

"You get a backbone, Severus! I'm not going in there now!"

"With all due respect, Professors. Would you mind shutting the hell up? Some of us are trying to listen."

Remus and Severus turned back towards the door and found Fred and George Weasley glaring at them, each with an ear pressed against the door.

"Did you ever think maybe knocking would be a good way of getting their attention?"

Severus and Remus looked shocked for a moment, and then they simultaneously narrowed their eyes and glared at the twins. George and Fred were smart enough to know they should be scared when the older wizards began to walk towards them.

Back in the room, Draco straddled Harry and grinned down at him. He was so turned on by Harry right now. He loved it when Harry got angry or frustrated and started commanding things, letting his anger strip away his inhibitions and transforming him into the young wizard Voldemort feared.

"Why don't you make me take off my robes?"

A growl ripped out of Harry's throat, and an unnatural wind spun through the room. Seconds later, Draco's yelp bounced off the thin walls when he found himself without his robes, dressed only in his
boxers. He looked down to find Harry was smirking. "There, that's better." He grabbed Draco by the back of his neck and pulled him down for another kiss.

Draco relaxed into the kiss, shifting his weight over Harry, keeping his torso off him by laying his arms down by Harry's head.

"Do you know," Draco kissed Harry's forehead, "how long I've waited," another kiss, this one on his chin, "to have you beneath me like this?" Draco sucked at Harry's bottom lip, tonguing it and loving the small noises Harry was emitting.

"More," Harry panted, arching against him and wrapping his legs around Draco's waist.

Draco drew away, sucking on Harry's tongue as he did so, enjoying Harry's heady taste of mint and snow, along with the Treacle tart and pumpkin juice he'd had earlier. Harry pressed his head back against the pillow when he felt Draco's tongue leave a fiery trail down his neck to his chest. Harry found he was having trouble breathing and knew if Draco didn't stop soon he was going to come.

That's what I'm hoping for, love. In one swift movement, Draco had Harry's boxers off and his mouth hovered over Harry's erection. Draco licked his lips. He took Harry's cock in his hand and pumped twice. Each time Harry's hips arched off of the bed.

Harry's eyes were closed tightly, and his hands entangled in his own hair, pulling at his locks in frustration until he felt Draco's mouth on him, tongue doing things Harry didn't think was possible. He then keened in distress when Draco suddenly pulled back when he heard a loud commotion outside their door.

"Oi! What are you two looking at us like that look for?" Harry groaned when he recognized the voice of one of the Weasley twins. "Run George!"

"Not now." Harry threw an arm over his eyes.

"Ignore them." Draco bent to kiss Harry, his hand resuming the caressing. Harry's body was agreeing with Draco, but his mind was telling him to stop because something embarrassing was about to happen. In the following moments, Harry was glad Draco had moved to lie on top of him and was not caught between his legs when the door burst open and the Weasley twins stumbled in as if they had been pushed. Immediately Draco shifted so that his back was to the twins and the open door, keeping Harry out of sight.

"So sorry to interrupt."

"We would have preferred to stay out…"

"In the hall and listen with the door shut."

"But your guardians are COWARDS! And forced us..."

"To intrude on your privacy."

Draco looked over at the twins and growled; scaring away anything else they might have said. Draco's irises were literally glowing silver and his pupils were narrowing into the shape of cat eyes.

"Draco, mate? Something is wrong with your eyes." George managed to say, before Draco opened his mouth and hissed at them. The twins looked at each other and started to back away. Draco's teeth had elongated and the light's reflection flashed threateningly against those sharp points.
"Out. Now." Draco spoke quietly, but the threat of death was clear. Fred and George quickly vacated and tried to curse Remus and Severus on their way down the hall. The older wizards turned back to the room just as the door slammed shut. Severus walked up to the door and started pounding on it!

"Potter! I want to talk to you now! Get decent and prepare for my intrusion in two minutes!"

Harry sighed and laid a hand on Draco's chest, bringing the blond's attention back to him. Draco was really very angry, and he looked so beautiful with his hair wild and his eyes and teeth like that. He kissed him lightly on the mouth.

"Calm down. We'll continue this later."

Draco’s eyes flashed, and he swept Harry up into a blazing kiss. "You bet your hot arse this will be continued."

Harry blushed, and turned away searching for his boxers. When he spotted them, hanging off the corner of the small desk, he wandlessly summoned them and slid them on. Draco hadn't moved, and continued to grin at him.

"What?" Harry asked, his self-consciousness making him irritable.

"Harry, you're beautiful." And with that Draco rolled out of bed and found his robes. Harry stumbled to his pile of clothes and quickly put them on. When Draco was dressed he headed for the door. Harry caught something from the corner of his eye and looked down.

"Hold on, Draco. You lost your letter." He picked it up and walked over to Draco, handing it over. Draco studied the blank cover of the letter before turning it over and opening it.

"It's from Pansy. Damn."

"Parkinson? I thought you were friends." Harry peered curiously at the parchment with the neat curly writing done in purple ink.

"We are. It's just that I was supposed to write her two days ago. After everything that's happened, I completely forgot. I'm sure she's been made aware of many things that have gone on, and she'll want me to tell her everything. I'm surprised this isn't a Howler."

"Why don't you invite her to meet us in Diagon Alley after we visit St. Mungo's? Then you can answer her questions while we have lunch somewhere," Harry suggested.

"That's brilliant, Harry! You-Know-Who has somehow been Confunded or Obliviated and has dropped the bounty on us, which means Pansy can be seen with us without worrying about becoming another target."

"Draco, say it with me. Vol-de-mort. Voldemort. It's not hard." Harry sighed when he saw Draco wasn't listening.

"Harry, you won't be bothered if we meet with Pansy, will you? I know you never really got along, but she is one of my best friends…"

"You get along with Ginny and Hermione now. If you can do that, then I can certainly get along with more Slytherins. Besides, I plan to make friends and allies with people from all of the Houses."

"You plan on telling me about your campaign?" Harry looked at him sharply, and Draco laughed.
“What? You didn't really think I wasn't aware something was going on in that half Slytherin, half idiot Gryffindor brain of yours?” Harry relaxed and smiled. Relieved that Draco wasn't upset that he was planning something elaborate.

"Of course I plan on telling you. I just want to think it over a bit more. You may not like what I have in mind."

"As long as you don't plan to turn us into muggles or contaminate our world further, then I'm with you. You know I am."

"It's funny, but four years ago I would have taken offense to that. Now though I think you're right, about some things. This in particular. I want you with me, as partners, as equals. When people think of Harry Potter, then they will think of Draco Malfoy, and vice versa. Will you be able to deal with that?" Draco gave him a dirty look. "Oh, right. Forgot who I was talking to."

"I thought you didn't want any more publicity or fame?"

"It's inevitable, but I'm not going to go looking for it. Go write Parkinson back now."

Draco kissed him and left, passing his godfather on the way. "Next time, you might want to use locking and silencing charms, Draco." His godson sent back a hiss in response and disappeared into his room.

"I suppose the best time to tell them about the bond will be tomorrow. Harry didn't react as badly as I expected to the Dumbledore news," Severus remarked to Remus.

"You didn't get to tell them everything, did you?"

"No, but that can come later. It has become clear this soul mate bond must take priority."

"What do you think is going to happen to them, Severus?"

"Draco is exhibiting signs of something, but I don't think we'll know for sure what it is until Harry's birthday and their transformations are complete. Only then will we be able to test their blood."

"They will need a great amount of support in the upcoming months." Severus narrowed his eyes on his colleague. "I plan to see they both get it. Do you?"

"Of course, Severus. Why would you think otherwise?"

"You will miss tomorrow night's meeting because you'll be meeting with Dumbledore and the Order instead, is this not so? Black has already informed Dumbledore of his disassociation with the Order, and I assumed you would do the same once you learned of everything."

"I'm on Harry's side, Severus. I imagine after finding out about Lily, you would also leave the Order. When Dumbledore realizes you know about Lily being your sister, he will have no other choice but to think you are no longer loyal to him. You wouldn't be trusted anymore."

"I am through with the Order," Severus confirmed in a hard voice.

"Yes, and so is Sirius. We need someone who Dumbledore continues to think is loyal, to stay close to him, and find out what he's doing."

"Very clever, werewolf. I didn't think you had it in you."

"Don't let the surprise kill you, Snape. That would truly be a shame," Harry said from the doorway.
He was clearly not in the mood to be polite.

"It's Severus, or Professor Snape when you are at school." Harry scowled and disappeared back into his room.

"Good luck, Severus. With this," Remus waved a hand towards Harry's open door, "and with tomorrow. I'll come by as soon as the meeting has concluded."

"Oh, thanks very much." Severus sneered at him.

Squaring his shoulders, he entered the room of a hormonal, nearly seventeen year old who had more insecurities than he did. It was the last place on earth Severus wanted to be and he was going in alone.
Malfoy Manor was an imposing sight to behold when surrounded by darkness and the thick fog of the late evening. Summer was always the time for fog, especially the kind that hovered over the ground, and was so concentrated it would be impossible to see below your knees. A new moon hung over the west wing tower, casting little light on the world below. The windows, however, were glowing from the light of lamps and torches, saving the gray stone manor from looking completely doomed, by casting a yellow glow upon the fog surrounding it.

Inside the manor, Death Eaters were occupied with various projects given to them by Voldemort. He wanted his followers to come up with ways to gain him more support and power within the Ministry, and he was doing it this way because it was Dumbledore's way, and Voldemort wanted his revenge on the old wizard. He learned he had been part of Dumbledore's plots from the beginning of his studies at Hogwarts when he was still called Tom Riddle. And with this information, the Dark Lord concluded he was chasing after the wrong wizard. Harry Potter was not the one he should fear at the moment and because Voldemort now knew about Potter being Severus' nephew and that he may no longer be loyal to Dumbledore, this opened Voldemort's mind to a plethora of ideas. Perhaps, under the right circumstances and for the right reasons, Potter may yet join his ranks. Voldemort conceded it was fortunate that Draco Malfoy had not extinguished under the killing curse he'd thrown at the boy in Potter's mind. That one incident proved to Voldemort just how powerful the two young wizards really were.

"Lucius. You've seen your son today." Voldemort spoke softly, his voice sounding strangely more human than Lucius could ever remember. He sat in a high backed chair in front of a grand black marble fireplace within Lucius' private study with Nagini curled around his chair and her head resting lazily in the Dark Lord's lap. Lucius stood off to the side, leaning against the fireplace mantel.

"Yes, My Lord. I met him earlier this evening. He was grateful for your… benevolence."

"Benevolence?" if Voldemort had an eyebrow, it would have shot up. "I would never describe myself as that. Perhaps forgiving would be better. And it is only to serve my own purposes. Do not think I have stopped my chase of him because he is your son, Lucius."

"Of course not, My Lord." Lucius knew very well the Dark Lord changed his mind because of Harry Potter, and for that he owed the young man more than he could ever give. "Should you decide to extend your hand to Potter once again, you have paved a smoother road to that goal by taking they bounty off my son's head."

"Yes, I realize this."

Voldemort went quiet for a time, thinking ahead to what Dumbledore might do in the future when he realized Voldemort was changing tactics. A thought came to him then and Voldemort smiled; a calculating smile. Perhaps he would wait before making any more plans. He would wait and see which way Potter decided to move.

"Has Parkinson had any success with his mission?"
"Yes, my Lord. As of this morning we have spies in all Ministry departments."

"All?" Voldemort sounded surprised. "Well that is good news." Nagini hissed along with her master's pleasure. Voldemort raised his hand to Lucius and the blond immediately approached. The Dark Lord took his arm, pushed his sleeve up, and then pressed his wand to the Dark Mark on Lucius’ arm, calling Parkinson to him. It took only moments before Parkinson entered the study. Lucius tried very hard to keep his scowl from showing. This was his private study. Why did the Dark Lord have to conduct his meetings here when there were nearly a hundred other suitable rooms to choose from?

Parkinson strode up and knelt before Voldemort, kissing the hem of his robes, while Lucius moved to stand beside the Dark Lord's chair.

"Parkinson, is it true your daughter and Draco Malfoy are friends?" Voldemort asked, staring down at Parkinson's bowed head. Pansy's father turned his head a fraction to shoot a glance at Lucius. The blond wizard inclined his head slightly.

"Yes, my Lord. They are good friends."

"I want your daughter to contact Draco. See that she renews her friendship with him. I want reports from her on what young Potter and Malfoy are up to."

"My Lord, Pansy will gladly accept your orders but Potter and Malfoy may suspect her motives..." Voldemort leaned forward, laying a finger at the top of Parkinson's head. The Death Eater flinched as a pain burst through his head.

"She is doing nothing more than being a friend and gathering side information. There is no deception here. I want Potter to know I'm checking up on him. I want your daughter to tell Potter and Malfoy that I've instructed her to keep an eye on them for me. Do you understand?"

"Yes, My Lord. I will have my daughter owl Draco right away."

"Good. You may go." Once Parkinson was gone, Voldemort stood and faced Lucius. "What are you thinking, Lucius?"

"Potter will appreciate the move. I'm sure not many people have been up front with him about a lot of things. He's used to manipulations."

"And in doing this, am I not manipulating him?"

Lucius gazed at his Dark Lord, and thought how best to answer the question. The Dark Lord’s moods fluctuated on a grand scale at times and that's putting it lightly. At times, Voldemort could expect an honest answer and would either accept or agree with said opinion, but at other times, he could get angry if not in the same opinion. Voldemort was very good at hiding his emotions, but was not the best, and Lucius was lucky enough to be able to see the tell tale signs.

"You would be, My Lord, but Potter would guess this. He will see it. But you've done it in a way that puts you both be in control, and he'll realize this too. Potter is intelligent enough, and if he doesn’t see it, my son will. Being a Slytherin, he'll see how it could be an advantage to them. It's a very neutral move but at the same time it's also a direct action. Potter will have to make his own move after this. It will be interesting to see what he does next."

The Dark Lord graced Lucius with a thin smile. "Yes." Then he turned away. Come Nagini, he hissed in Parselmouth. We will retire for the night.
When Voldemort was gone, Lucius sank into the chair newly vacated, his favorite chair by the way, and stared into the fire. He didn't know how things were turning out the way they were, but he had a feeling he was going to like the changes to come.

Severus walked into Harry's room and shut the door. "I will start by saying, I have never, nor will I ever be a co president of the I Hate Harry Potter Club. Furthermore, ten points from Gryffindor for describing me as a snarky, slimy, greasy bastard."

Harry, who had been leaning dejectedly against the wall, suddenly paled. "You saw that part?" Severus nodded on his way to the desk, and pulled the chair out to sit down. "I didn't mean for you to see that!"

"As I would imagine," Severus intoned as he sat back and studied his nephew.

Harry's hair was a mess, as always expected, but the look only added to his character now since his hair had grown down to nearly his shoulders. Severus suspected many people were beginning to think the same as it gave Harry a very dramatic and appealing look. His shoulders were not broad, he had a small frame, and his height was below average, but that was surely due to the malnourishment he received throughout the years. But despite all of that one could see his strong character, and though he was a bit small, he made up for it in wiry muscle, no doubt gained from playing Quidditch.

But now Harry looked tense and confused, standing there against the wall. In other words, he was looking surly. Severus understood this by the lines creasing Harry's brow, the way his eyes seemed shadowed, and his jaw was clenched tight. Harry's eyes were the only physical feature that reminded Severus of Lily. They did share many personality traits, thank Merlin! At least his nephew didn't act too much like James Potter.

It was strange looking at Potter now, thinking of him as Harry, and stranger still looking at Harry now and thinking of him as his nephew. What did he know about being an uncle? Severus knew potions and spy work. He got along with his godson because Draco knew not to expect things from him. But what was Harry expecting? Severus wanted to try, but he didn't know how. He knew how to terrorize students and most adults when he chose, but how was he supposed to act as an uncle? And he couldn't just agree and then leave it at that. He was Harry's only living blood relative and Harry was at a fragile state right now. If Severus agreed, Harry would need his support and… love. But even then, Severus knew he wouldn't give up this link they had found.

While Severus was quietly questing through the questions and answers within his head, Harry began to study him, trying to find a clue as to what the man was thinking. Severus looked relaxed, but his eyes flickered from time to time with uncertainty. Honestly, Harry didn't know what Severus wanted to talk to him about. It could be about Dumbledore or he could want to talk about the journal or it could be about this bond thing with Draco.

Harry straightened his shoulders and pushed off the wall when he realized Severus was nervous, which could only mean that he was there to talk to Harry about their relationship. Harry closed his eyes and tried to relax, and he remembered what his mother had said to him. "...Severus is going to have a hard time coming to terms with this information. He is a hard man, but despite that, his heart is very fragile... And this will take some time for him to come to terms with. It will be very hard for him, especially after what transpired the last time we spoke. I want you to promise me you'll give the wizard a chance, Harry." And he promised to try. Harry sighed and opened his eyes, and determined nothing would be said unless he started.

"I... Err, I apologize for calling you a snarky, slimy, greasy bastard, Professor." And enjoyed saying
it once more. "I was in shock then, and I don't believe you've never entertained the thought of having an I Hate Harry Potter club." There was a quick tiny quirk at the corner of Severus' mouth that could have been the beginnings of a smile, before he quickly chased it away. It didn't matter; Harry was quick to catch it.

"I suppose we should be glad that I never gave into such temptation. Being a member of such a club could ruin our family relations," Severus said lightly, and was glad to see Harry's quick grin.

"You don't want to forget you know?" Harry bluntly asked, having gained some courage from their friendly banter.

"Do you?" Severus knew it wasn't fair to ask him that when Harry had asked first. Anyone could see Harry was desperate for acceptance, but as he'd said before, Severus had his own insecurities and he wasn't about to display those flaws to this young wizard, should Harry decide he wanted to forget Severus ever existed.

Harry's hands found their way to his hair, and as usual when he was in deep thought, Harry yanked at his strands or ran his fingers through, until his black hair was sticking up in all sorts of directions. When his hands fell back down to his sides, Severus held his breath.

"How could you think that, Professor? You're the only blood family I have left! We've never gotten along, but I don't see why we can't make up for that somehow. You can't be all bad if Draco likes you, and I know you could teach me so much…"

"I think…we could teach much to each other," Severus said quietly, and mentally patted himself on the back for a job well done when Harry smiled brightly back at him.

The next morning Draco, who had been awake and dressed for at least an hour, burst into Harry's room, threw open the window shutters spilling light into the room and dragged the comforter off the deeply sleeping form of his soul mate. Draco frowned disappointedly when he found Harry didn't sleep in the nude. Oh well, at least he could stare at Harry's naked back for a minute. His frown deepened when he caught sight of the healing bruises Harry had gained from Dursley. Draco sat on the edge and lightly ran his fingers over the fading bruises, and smiled when the bruising began to disappear altogether. Hooray for soul mate bonds!

"Harry. Get up. We're going shopping after we meet Pansy today." Harry murmured something and tuned over onto his back, pulling the pillow over his head as he did so. "Harry, get up! We still have to get to St. Mungo's before we can go shopping."

"G'way, git," came the mumbled reply from beneath the pillow, promptly followed by a snore.

"You're never going to get him up that way," Hermione, herself an early riser, said as she walked into the room.

"How do you suggest I do it then?"

"Let me think…." Hermione tapped her chin as she thought about the options. "Do you prefer a violent Harry reaction or a calm Harry reaction?"

Draco immediately grinned and rubbed his hands together. "A violent reaction should be fun." He sat down on the desk chair and prepared to watch the show. He began by curiously watching as Hermione smirked at him and walked over to the desk. She used her wand to levitate the desk onto its side before moving behind it. "What are you doing?"
"You should take cover." Hermione then raised her wand and pointed it at the slumbering form on the bed.

"Why would I want to take cover?"

Hermione smiled and cast her spell. "Aguamenti." A jet of ice-cold water shot out of the end of her wand, sailed across the room and drenched Harry and his sheets. Immediately after casting the spell, Hermione ducked and took cover behind the desk.

"Stupefy!" Harry barked after bolting upright in bed, his wand gripped tightly in his hand. Draco dropped to the ground just in time to see Harry's spell shoot past where his head had been seconds before.

"Bloody hell, Hermione! You could have warned me!" Draco yelled from the ground. Hermione peeked over the edge of the desk to see Harry was still sitting up but now his wand lay in his lap, his eyes blearily opening and closing, trying to clear the sleep away.

"I did! I told you to take cover!" She replied after righting the desk back to its original position.

"You could have been more specific!"

"Shut the fuck up!" Harry yelled, rubbing his eyes with the heels of his palms.

"Did I mention the violent way is usually not the best because Harry wakes up in a bad mood?"

"No, Granger. You failed to mention that part."

Harry stood up and scratched the back of his head. "Wah time's it?"

"It's nearly nine in the morning, Harry. Hurry up and get dressed so we can go."

"What's got you so excited, Draco?" he walked towards the bathroom, raising his arms over his head to stretch as he did so. Hermione snorted when Draco, who had opened his mouth to answer, had to wipe his mouth with his sleeve to keep the drool from running down his chin as Harry's back muscles began to ripple as he stretched.

"Um… Er…" Draco remained speechless until the bathroom door shut in his face. "Shopping! We're going shopping, Harry!"

The door was pulled open again. "But I don't want to go shopping. I don't need anything," Harry whined.

"Really, Harry." Draco shook his head as if disappointed in a little child. "Don't be ridiculous. Of course you need things. You need a new wardrobe for starters, and a-"

"I don't need a new wardrobe, Draco." Harry leant against the bathroom doorframe and crossed his arms over his chest. Draco licked his lips at the sight of Harry's bare chest, and then his eyes traveled down where Harry's pajama bottoms were riding really low on his hips.

See something you like?

"You do need a new wardrobe," Draco continued after giving Harry a heavy mental caress, causing Harry to blush. "And I'll tell you why. First, you are a pureblood, Harry. You need to dress like it. I'm not going to compromise on this. And I don't care if you think I sound like a snob…"

Harry started coughing. "Yes…you do!" he tried to camouflage his words with the coughing, but he
could clearly be heard. Draco went on as if he didn't hear him, be he was already thinking of ways to get back at Harry for that.

"If you want to know everything about our world, to completely become a member of the magical society, then you need to act like you want it. I'm not saying get rid of your muggle clothes, I quite like your arse in jeans, but if you want to be taken seriously by other members of society, you need to look the part. And I refuse to be seen with you when you look like a beggar, Harry."

Harry chuckled, "all right, Draco. You made your point. I do need new robes." Then he looked over at his best friend. "You as well, Hermione."

"What?" she croaked.

"We'll need you, Hermione. You're my friend and let's face it, my brains. I wouldn't have passed most of my classes if it weren't for you. Draco and I need you, and we all need to blend into the political hierarchy if we want to get anywhere." Draco beamed at his soul mate's logic, and forgot the comment about him thinking Draco was a snob.

"I understand what you're saying, I really do. But how do you expect to get people behind you when one of your council is a muggleborn?"

"Ooh, I like how you think!" Draco praised, flashing Hermione a rarely given smile. "Part of Harry's Council. I like it! It sounds so much better than Death Eater."

"We're getting a little ahead of ourselves, aren't we guys?" he asked amused. "Besides, it wouldn't be my council, Draco. If it's a council we have, which seems a little far-fetched, it will be our council. I told you, we're in this together, all the way."

Hermione felt like a Peeping Tom as she stood there and witnessed between Harry and Draco the most emotional, heart-racing gaze she'd ever seen. All that anger and frustration they'd had for each other as boys had changed into an explosive passionate love as they were becoming men, and it could clearly be seen as they looked at each other. As intelligent as she was, Hermione couldn't believe she had never realized before what it was that drew the two together time and again.

Hermione shifted uncomfortably under the weight of such a moment, and her movements seemed to bring the wizards back to the world around them.

Draco cleared his throat and said softly, "and about you being muggleborn, I shouldn't worry too much about that. People already know Hermione Granger as Harry Potter's best friend. They know your muggleborn, but you've already proven yourself worthy to be considered a magical influence. It would be stupid to disregard your power just because your parents are muggles."

"Draco, I…" Hermione looked ready to faint. Such praise from Draco Malfoy was unheard of. When she looked at him and found he was smiling reassuringly, she burst into tears and threw her arms around him. "You don't know how much it means to hear you say that, Draco. I'm completely speechless."

"I doubt that," Harry muttered, then grinned with mischief at Draco and shut himself in the bathroom again, locking the door unless Draco gets the idea that he wanted company.

You're really not going to leave me out here with Hermione like this, are you? That's cruel, Harry. I thought you forgave me for being a prat to you all those times before. This isn't funny, Harry!

Harry wasn't really ignoring Draco, but he did think it was funny, and spent most of his shower time laughing under the hot water.
"Hermione, calm down. I was only telling the truth. Besides, you're my friend now. Why wouldn't I say those things?" he thought she'd calmed down but as soon as he said that, she started bawling again. Draco assumed it was all those repressed emotions showing up after she'd gotten rid of Weasley. She deserved better anyway, just as long as she used that better man to cry on instead of him.

Draco didn't know what to say so he awkwardly hugged Hermione to him and listened to her sniffles. He thanked all the stars in heaven when Severus walked into the room. Before anything could be said, Draco had somehow transferred Hermione into his godfather's arms, laughed at Severus' stricken look, and ran out of the room. He felt no guilt at all throwing the Gryffindor witch at his godfather, though he knew he would pay dearly for it later. Probably from both of them. Hermione would surely be completely embarrassed now.

"I'm sorry, Professor. I guess I scared him." Hermione blushed and quickly wiped her eyes when she realized who was holding onto her. Strangely, she felt no urgent need to move away from the Potions Master.

"That seems to happen often, Miss Granger." Severus slowly pulled away from her. "You've scared me on numerous occasions."

Hermione gasped, and took a few steps back. "Professor! That was a joke!"

"A poor one, but yes, it was a joke."

Hermione was nearly in an apoplectic state. She'd just had Draco Malfoy claim her as a friend and tell her she was just as good as any pureblood, and now Severus Snape was joking with her. What was she supposed to do, if not freak out?

"Did you finish the journal, Miss Granger?"

Hermione stared blankly at him for a moment; her mind trying to catch up to the subject change, as she was still stuck thinking about alternative universes and its peoples. "Oh yes! Just a moment. I'll go get it." Hermione raced back to her room to collect the journal, and on the way back, managed to collect her thoughts on what she'd read within the book. Silently, she handed the journal back to Severus and met his steady gaze.

"Have you been convinced of Dumbledore's deception?" his voice whispered to her in silk waves. Severus barely managed to control the tremors. She chewed on her bottom lip for a minute, before nodding sadly.

"I never imagined he could do such things. And there's more, isn't there, Professor? More you haven't told Harry yet."

Severus nodded, but didn't go on with that topic as the shower stopped running. He didn't want Harry to overhear.

"Please tell him soon, Professor. It's his trust we need to work on rebuilding. Keeping things from him will only make it worse."

"I am aware of that. I do not wish to cause my nephew any more reasons to distrust me."

"Thank you, Professor." Hermione smiled brightly at him, and he had to check himself from touching her hair.

"Miss Granger, in the future, you may call me Severus, unless we are at Hogwarts. Would that
"please you?" he didn't know why he asked, didn't know why he wanted her to call him by his first name, but was pleased when the young witch looked delighted by his request.

"I would like that!" There was silence, as the Potions Master and the Gryffindor witch looked at each other uncertainly. "Make sure to see that Draco and Harry keep out of trouble on your outing today, Miss Granger."

Hermione nodded. "They will behave themselves or else find their faces at the end of my wand," she said sternly. Severus allowed a small smile to slip. He'd seen her in action; he believed Hermione meant what she said.

"Good. We shall see each other soon, Miss Granger." Severus turned towards the door.

"Oh, um…Severus?" she called to him in a small voice. He turned back to her, his black robes billowing out in an artful gracefulness that caused Hermione a moment of jealousy. She wanted to know how she could get her robes to do that. When Severus was looking at her with those intense obsidian eyes, she found she couldn't look him in the eye when she made her request, so instead she kept her gaze firmly on his left shoulder.

"I was wondering…. Er…that is…you could call me Hermione when we're not at school. But only if you want to… you don't have-"

"Hermione," he purred, enjoying the witch's jump of surprise. When she was looking him in the eye, he smiled and then turned to leave again. Hermione walked over to the desk chair and sank down into it, her knees shaking wildly.

"What was all that, Hermione?" Draco asked in the same drawl Severus had used to say her name. He grinned when she covered her burning face with her hands.

"What was all what?" Harry asked, coming out of the bathroom, drying his dripping hair with a towel. He had another towel tied around his waist. Hermione rolled her eyes. Honestly, just because the bloke was gay and she was his best friend, didn't mean she was comfortable seeing him in nothing but a towel. But Harry had never been shy about his body, which was a wonder after all the abuse he'd been through. Draco, on the other hand, was highly appreciative of the picture Harry made and was advancing towards Harry like a stalking tiger. Seeing this, and observing how oblivious Harry seemed to be, Hermione grabbed Draco's arm before he reached his prey and began pulling the Slytherin to the door.

"Never mind, Harry. Get dressed. There's a lot to do today." She pushed Draco out into the hall. "We'll wait for you downstairs."

"Right, Hermione. Be down in a minute." He waved back at her as she shut the door.

"Now then, let's get some breakfast, Draco."

"Fine," Draco grumbled.

They went downstairs and picked a table at the back of the tavern, ordering light breakfasts. The food had just been delivered when Harry slid into the booth next to Draco and began buttering a roll.

"Where's Gin?" he asked.

"Oh, the twins came to fetch her back home last night under Mrs. Weasley's orders. Ginny guessed Ron had something to do with that. He must have made up a story and told it to his mum. The twins say she was fit to be tied."
"If Ron spoke to her, Mrs. Weasley probably thinks I tried to sacrifice her daughter for some evil purpose."

"Don't worry. Ginny will set her right."

"Yes, and hopefully she'll set Weasel right as well," Draco growled. Harry laid a hand on Draco's arm, and the Slytherin let go of his momentary anger. Then he felt Harry's sudden apprehension.

"What is it, Harry?"

"Hermione, we're meeting Pansy Parkinson after St. Mungo's. Will you be able to get along with her?"

"Harry James Potter, do I look like Ronald to you? Of course I can get along with Parkinson. I can get along with anyone once they've seen reason. I'll just have to make her see reason, one way or another."

"And Parkinson?" Harry asked of Draco. The blond waved his hand in the air as if it was unimportant.

"Pansy reminds me a little of you, Hermione. I'm sure you two have way too much in common for my tastes. And Pansy was always neutral when it came to muggleborns. She's attracted to power and skill, like most Slytherins, and how they can best work for her. She's a true Slytherin. She'll know becoming friends with you, Hermione, would be in her best interests. But like Hermione said, Pansy will need to see this first. She'll need to see reason. I can't guarantee her behavior before that happens though. She can be a bit… overbearing."

"I'm not sure I want to be friends with somebody who will only see me because of what I can do and not who I am."

"But Hermione, with you it's one in the same. You're brilliant in every way!"

"Harry, please. You're embarrassing me."

"Yes, Harry. Cease the disgusting praise and finish your breakfast," Draco drawled, then continued to drink his tea.

From the Leaky Cauldron, the three Flooed to St. Mungo's. After dusting off their clothes, they headed directly to the front desk where a witch with braids wrapped around her head like snakes sat behind it reading *Witch Weekly*.

"Excuse me, miss?" Harry said once they reached the desk. "Where do I go to get my eyesight fixed?"

The witch peered at him curiously, her gaze traveling across his face, and Harry braced himself for the inevitable. She spotted his scar. "Oh! Um, let me see…" She dropped her magazine and dragged her long red fingernail down a list written on parchment stuck to the desk. "Here it is! Fourth floor, west wing. Sign in with the Healer at the desk and explain why you're there."

"Thank you," Harry replied. Just as he was turning, the witch reached out to touch his arm.

"Wait, are you really Harry Potter?"

Harry frowned at her hand, suddenly feeling the overwhelming need to ask her what the hell she
thought she was doing by touching him and wanting to shake her hand off as quickly as possible. Draco’s pale hand passed his line of vision and he watched in a detached sort of way as the blond slapped her hand away from his arm before advancing towards her by leaning over the desk. And then the growling started, and it grew in volume until most of the people waiting in the reception area started to look towards the group at the desk, most thinking they would see a vicious animal readying for an attack.

"Oh!" Hermione exclaimed, catching on to the problem. She jumped forward and pulled Draco back by the arm. "Yes he is. Good day!" Then she wrapped her arm around a very tense Draco’s waist and steered him clear of the front desk, towards the lifts. She was thankful when the lift door immediately opened, and they were alone when the door slid shut.

"Draco? What was that? It looked like you wanted to rip her throat out…. and the snarls coming from you were ferocious!"

Draco smirked. "I'm a ferocious person, Hermione."

Harry laughed, catching Hermione’s attention, and she noted the faraway look as he gazed at Draco. "And you, Harry! Why were you just standing there? You must have seen the way Draco was acting. Aren't you the least bit concerned?"

"Not as much as I should be. I can't really explain, but all I can do is watch. I feel his need to protect and I want to let him and I do nothing because he's wrapped me up in a safe cocoon. I stay there because it's so much better than the real world!" Harry was nearly yelling by the time he finished. The lift doors opened and they all stepped out.

"An explanation eludes me as well." Draco reached for Harry's hand, and soothed the brunet as their fingers laced together. "It only happens if I'm really angry or if Harry is approached wrong in any way. My mind stays focused on only one thing: protecting Harry at all costs."

They walked under an archway, where a plaque hung welcoming visitors to the fourth floor west wing.

"Aren't you concerned?"

"Of course I'm concerned. Anyone would be if they started exhibiting traits strongly resembling wild animals."

Arriving at their destination, they each signed in and Harry explained why he was there. They were promptly shown into a windowless room with a single bed and stool, and told to wait there for the next available Healer. At once, Draco started pacing. The more he worried, the more he paced.

"Draco, will you please stop pacing? You're giving me a headache." Hermione sat on the stool and began rubbing her temples, trying to keep the growing headache at bay.

"Maybe you should think this over some more. The procedure used will not be entirely void of danger."

"I'm only getting my vision corrected, Draco. Stop worrying."

Draco scowled at the door. "Did they fail to notice your name on the sign-in parchment? Why are we still waiting?" Harry and Hermione rolled their eyes at him.

"Good morning!" exclaimed a young woman as she came in and shut the door behind her. She was a slightly plump lady with a kind smile and sparkling brown eyes. Her brown hair was pulled back...
into a severe bun that seemed to be too old a style for someone her age. Smiling, she approached the bed with a floating tray following behind her.

"Good morning," Hermione replied, immediately liking the woman.

"Morning, Healer," Harry mumbled, suddenly becoming apprehensive about being in the hospital. He'd never voluntarily gone to the hospital for something, but every time he needed a Healer it was because he had been in some insane accident. His nerves spiked when he saw the witch pull out her wand. Draco moved next to the bed, placed a warm hand against the back of Harry's neck, and glared coldly at the witch.

"Well then, let's see. My name is Healer Bluemoon, and you are…" the Healer looked at the parchment in her hand and scanned the contents. "Harry Potter. Here to get corrective vision, are we?"

"Yes, that's right," Harry replied. Healer Bluemoon nodded and turned to the tray where three dark red vials of potions sat. Healer Bluemoon picked the first one up and started to shake it. Harry was infinitely relieved the Healer didn't go barmy over him once she'd read his name.

"You do know what you're doing, don't you?" drawled Draco, staring the Healer down.

She turned to him and flashed a smile before turning back to the tray and picking the second vial up to shake. "Of course. I've done this procedure many times. I am the HIC, after all."

"HIC?" Harry inquired.

"Healer in Charge," Hermione supplied.

"Oh." Well apparently someone had told someone about Harry's presence. He didn't think it was a coincidence to be assigned the Healer In Charge. But still, at least she wasn't fawning over him.

"I only want to make sure you read the name right, and you understand who you're about to point your wand at."

"Draco…" Harry muttered.

"What? I just thought Healer Pinkmoon should know the consequences in case something goes wrong…"

"Draco!"

"It's not Pinkmoon, Draco. Her name is Bluemoon," Hermione muttered.

"Don't worry about it, Mr. Potter. I'm sure he's only nervous," Bluemoon replied, smiling a pretty smile at them all. She looked very amused by Draco's antics and silent threats.

"Malfoys never get nervous…" As Draco was speaking, Harry and Hermione turned to each other and mimed the words along with him. Hermione snickered when Draco glared at them.

"All right, Mr. Potter. Take this and drink it as soon as the lights go out. Once you've drunk all three vials, I will use my wand for the next part of the procedure. Sound good?" Harry took the potion vial and stared at it. At least they were small bottles, since he had to drink three.

"Erm, two questions?"

"Go on, then. Ask away."
"Why are you going to turn the lights off? Aren't you supposed to be able to see what you're doing?" he asked. Draco and Hermione nodded, as they were curious about that as well.

"It's the spell; the healing spell can't be used unless there is darkness. I suppose you could think of it like when muggles go into a dark room to develop pictures. The pictures would be ruined if they were exposed to light during development. Do you understand what I mean?"

Harry and Hermione nodded, while Draco looked blank. We'll explain it to you later, Draco.

"But how can you see what you're doing?" Hermione wanted to know.

"I've put a temporary charm on my eyes to see in the dark. It works quite well. And what is your other question, Mr. Potter?"

"Can you make sure my eyes stay green?" Harry blushed when the Healer smiled at him, showing off two dimples at the corners of her mouth.

"Of course I can! Believe me; I would not want to be responsible for damaging those very pretty eyes of yours. Now, are you ready to drink?"

Harry nodded and watched as Healer Bluemoon swished her wand and doused the lights. Harry gulped down the first vial and shuddered at the awful taste of garbage. Ugh! Bluemoon handed him the other vial and he took it, repeating the action once more after that.

"Now stay still and I'll just perform the spell."

Harry felt the need to move away from the voice, but he dug his fingers into the mattress to keep from moving. He couldn't see her at all and that made him nervous.

I can see her. It's all right. She at least looks like she knows what she's doing. Hold still.

How are you able to see her?

I don't know.

Healer Bluemoon began to chant something under her breath, and a soft purple light left the tip of her wand and traveled to surround Harry's eyes. "Just relax, Mr. Potter. It will be over in a minute."

"I don't feel anything."

"Nothing at all? That's odd. You should be feeling something, at the most a ticklish sensation."

"Nope, nothing."

Healer Bluemoon said nothing until the purple light disappeared "All right. It's done." She put the lights back on and stepped back. "Is your vision better?" she asked, smiling and obviously expecting to hear she'd been successful.

Harry bit his lip as his eyes travelled around the room. "No. I still can't see clearly."

"Well that's just impossible! It had to have worked. I assure you, Mr. Potter, I've done this hundreds of times."

"Hold your tongue," Hermione hissed to Draco when she saw him prepare to verbally assault the mystified Healer.
"Tests will be needed. Lie down, Mr. Potter and we'll see what the problem is."

Harry did as he was told and Healer Bluemoon conducted her tests. Hermione was the best at keeping Draco in order, Harry noticed with amusement. She deliberately pulled Draco into a debate she knew could last all day. By the time the Healer was finished, she was looking at him completely perplexed.

"This has never happened before. I'm afraid I won't be able to fix your eyes. Something is prohibiting treatment. A magical barrier protecting your body from being tampered with in any way."

Harry got off the bed, shaking his head. "That figures. Thanks anyway."

"I'm sorry I couldn't help you, Mr. Potter."

"It's really all right. I have a feeling this will resolve itself soon." He smiled to reassure her that he really wasn't troubled because she looked disappointed that she couldn't help him.

"You're really not upset are you, Harry?" Hermione asked on the way down in the lift.

"No. It just makes sense that this has to do with the bond. I guess I'll have to wait and see what happens."

"You two are being awfully nonchalant about this whole bond thing."

Harry shrugged.

"I know Severus knows more about it then he's saying, and when he's ready he'll tell us. I don't think it's anything life threatening, so I see no point in worrying about it now. Besides, we did have plans to visit Severus' library," Draco explained, knowing Harry felt the same way. "I only wish we could visit the Malfoy Manor library. I know for a fact we'd find something there with useful information."

"Why can't we?"

"I'd rather not say here out in the open."

"Ah." So that's where Voldemort liked to hang out. Harry grinned, an idea popping into his head.

They returned to the Leaky Cauldron to wait for Pansy's arrival. In the time that followed, Harry learned Draco could be annoying when he had to wait before going on a shopping spree. He'd annoyed Hermione so much that she finally snapped and cast the silencing spell on him.

"There, that's better." She smiled at a glaring Draco and tucked her wand away. Harry knew better then to let on that he was grateful to Hermione, so he shut those thoughts tight away from his mind. Draco glared at his soul mate when he realized Harry had no intention of taking the spell off.

_You are so dead, Potter!_

_Fuck, I can still here you...you better not start about the shopping, Draco. Parkinson will be here soon and then we'll go._

_Seriously, Harry. Remove the spell right now._

Harry undid the spell and endured ten minutes of Draco's death stare before Hermione distracted them from the uneasy silence.
"Look, there's Parkinson. And...is that Zabini?"

"Blaise is here too?" Draco asked, his mood immediately lightened by the prospect of seeing his two best friends. Hermione looked to Harry to see if he looked as apprehensive as she felt. She hadn't been expecting two Slytherins and had only prepared to face down one. What kind of day were they going to have in the company of people who had supposedly hated her and Harry for years.

Harry was frowning, glaring hard at Zabini as the wizard approached their table. His mouth parted slightly and Hermione spotted two sharp points peeking out from under his upper lip. She realized he was baring his teeth like a creature would do when feeling threatened or when they wanted to make sure their property stays claimed.

"Harry!" She whispered and shook his arm. He looked at her and the haziness in his eyes started to disappear. "They're just friends. Don't worry."

Harry's teeth shrank back to their original size, and he slumped back into his seat. "Thanks Hermione."

She just smiled and patted his hand. Draco had gotten up to meet his friends, who were passing the bar. Once Pansy and Blaise caught sight of their friend approaching, they stopped and let him come to them.

Draco noted their narrowed eyes and thin lipped frowns and sighed. They were mad. "Pansy, Blaise." He stopped in front of them and waited. Blaise arched a brow at him and then looked over at the table at Harry before turning back to Draco, a knowing gleam in his eyes. Draco returned with a smirk.

"Draco, how good it is to see you again. Because at one point we thought you were dead, you know. Yes we thought you were dead! And then we find that you aren't dead, you aren't going to end up dead anytime soon, and worst of all, you've bonded yourself to Harry Potter." Pansy said every word slowly, and it was obviously said in forced cheerfulness. Draco quirked an eyebrow at Blaise.

"She's been working on her anger management over the summer. It's been working for the most part."

"Ah. That explains the lack of Howlers."

"I demand an explanation, Draco!" Pansy shrieked, causing both boys to flinch. "Right now!"

"Calm down, Pansy. Let's go sit down and maybe I'll answer your questions."

"You will answer my questions," she insisted as she and Blaise followed after their friend.

"Yes, Pansy dear." He smirked when Pansy hissed at him.

You didn't tell me Zabini would be coming.

Harry, I didn't know.

Right. And it looks like they didn't know Hermione and I would be here either. Draco glanced at his friends who were so surprised that it showed on their faces. And then as one Blaise and Pansy turned furious eyes on him.

"Draco, why didn't you tell Parkinson we'd be here? That's not really fair to them. At least we knew Parkinson was going to be here." Harry reproached his soul mate, and Draco merely shrugged. The
other two Slytherins were now looking at Harry in surprise. Blaise was able to recover first.

"Er…that's all right, Potter. We know who to blame," Blaise responded and then winked at Hermione as he sat next to her. Pansy took the seat next to Draco and began drumming her sharp nails against the table. Nothing was being said, and it was driving Harry crazy.

This is awkward, Draco. You have to do something!

Fine, if you insist…

I do!

"My lovely counterpart over there," Draco said, standing up and pointing to Harry, "doesn't like this uncomfortable silence and can bear it no longer, so now I suggest we go shopping."

"That's a great idea, Draco! Shopping!" Hermione beamed at him, shocking the other Slytherins once again with her familiar attitude with Draco, and they watched speechless as Draco held out his arm for Hermione, who took it and then they were walking in animated discussion, out of the Leaky Cauldron to the back where the entrance to Diagon Alley was located.

Harry slowly stood up from the table, watching his soul mate and best friend disappear. Parkinson and Zabini took a position on either side of him and stared after Draco as well.

"I can't believe he just left me with you," Harry said.

"I can't believe Draco just left with Granger on his arm, and they were both smiling," Blaise spoke in awe.

"Well I can't believe our Draco just called Potter his lovely counterpart! It's not all true, is it? What's being said about you two bonded? It can't be. I thought my father was trying to be funny!" She sounded outraged, her voice gaining volume by the second, as if Harry was the worst thing that could ever happen to Draco. "This is just ridiculous! Draco is used to having the best. Why would he choose to bond with-"

"He loves me," Harry whispered.

Pansy laughed a cruel mocking laugh. "Oh please! Spare me, Potter! He would never love someone like you! My darling Draco has standards after all! You are nothing but-"

"Pansy, stop it!" Blaise snapped, keeping his eyes on Potter. The Gryffindor was clearly being affected by what she was saying. Blaise had never seen Potter look insecure or so vulnerable as he did right now, and it looked like he was shrinking in on himself. Potter's green eyes were flicking right and left like he wanted to run, and when Blaise raised a hand, Potter flinched back.

"Hey, Potter? What's wrong with you?" Pansy demanded, taking a step towards him, who in turn began backing up.

"Back off, Pansy!" Blaise quietly hissed at her. "Can't you see he's scared?"

Pansy wasn't seeing this. She only saw Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived; the arrogant jerk who liked to badmouth Slytherins. She couldn't imagine her words would have any effect on him. But she was wrong, he was affected, because the words were coming from Draco's best friend, and as a result her shots were hitting Harry hard enough to hurt. And he suddenly felt very alone…

"Pansy, not now…"
Pansy turned to her friend. "What are you on about, Blaise?"

Harry took off then, running up the staircase, taking three stairs at a time. When he got to his room, he slammed the door shut and locked it. He pressed his back against the door and slid down to the floor. Downstairs, Blaise and Pansy heard a door slam.

"Fuck, Pansy! Do you have any idea how mad Draco is about to be? Weren't you paying attention to your father? The Dark Lord said Draco and Potter have a soul mate bond—"

"Rubbish! I bet Potter has always wanted Draco and has given him a love potion."

"Pansy, you're usually smarter than this. I think we should go find Potter and—" Blaise suddenly found his robes in the grip of a snarling silver eyed Slytherin.

"What the fuck did you do to him?" Draco demanded. "What did you say?"

"Calm down, Draco. I simply told Potter the truth. You couldn't possibly want someone like him…"

"You told him what?" Draco asked slowly, letting go of Blaise's robes to turn on Pansy.

"Draco, why are you acting so peculiar? I think you need to get checked out by a Healer. Potter may have given you a love potion."

"Pansy…" Blaise warned.

"Hush, Blaise! Really, Draco. It's the only thing I can think of…."

"If you've done any more damage, Pansy…I swear I may not forgive you." With that, Draco turned and bounded up the stairs.

Blaise turned to his friend. "Pansy, you really did it this time. I recognized the signs on Potter. You really may have done some damage."

"Signs? Damage? What are you talking about?"

"Potter's been abused."

Harry pulled his knees up to his chest and dropped his forehead to his knees. He just needed to calm down, that was all. It was just words a stupid Slytherin said. She didn't know anything. Draco wanted him; Harry knew it for a fact. But back there, he'd felt so alone and he'd gotten scared…it flashed him back to the nightmares he'd endured during the magical coma. Only now he really did have someone standing in front of him, telling him he wasn't worth it. His mind had frozen and he hadn't even thought about asking for Draco through their bond.

"Harry, it's me. Open the door."

Harry raised his head and frowned. Another reason why he hadn't called Draco; because he had just left him with Zabini and Parkinson, and because Harry felt he may have overreacted and was embarrassed.

"Harry, I'm sorry. Will you let me in?"

Harry sighed and got to his feet; he ran his fingers through his hair and took a calming breath before opening the door. As soon as Draco saw him, he had Harry in his arms, nearly squeezing the life out of him.
"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to leave you alone with the wolves."

Harry's laugh was a bit shaky, but it was a laugh just the same, and Draco was relieved to see Harry was all right.

"Wolves? How do you like that, Blaise? We're wolves now!" Pansy whispered to Blaise from their peeping spot in the hallway.

"Look at them, Pans," Blaise murmured seriously. "I don't think it's a love potion."

Draco was cradling Harry's face in his hands, his thumbs caressing over Harry's cheeks. It was the look in their eyes that convinced Blaise it was real, whatever it was between the two young wizards.

"We're both idiots sometimes, Draco."

"Yeah, I guess so." Draco bent down, kissing Harry softly, deeply; keeping Harry wrapped tightly in his arms.

Pansy pressed her hand to her chest and took a shaky breath. "Oh Merlin… Blaise, have you ever seen Draco like that before?"

"No one has, I bet."

"Parkinson, Zabini? May I have a word, please?" Hermione asked from where she stood at the top of the stairs. With one last look into the room, the astonished Slytherins turned and walked towards Hermione.

"Listen, I want to make this clear and I don't want to have to repeat myself. Understand?" Hermione said in a hard voice, her tone looking for no arguments. The Slytherin's nodded, amused. "Harry and Draco are soul mates, and they share a soul mate bond, which means whether we like it or not, they are together now. Consequently the three of us will be seeing quite a lot of each other I would imagine, and I just thought, for our friends' sakes, we should have a truce." Hermione ended by holding her hand out to the Slytherins.

Pansy wrinkled her nose at the outstretched hand, but Blaise shrugged and was about to take Hermione up on the offer, when Pansy slapped his hand away. "Why should we agree, Granger? What's in it for us?" it was a reasonable question for a Slytherin, and Hermione had been expecting it. She stepped forward, and smirked in Pansy's face.

"I'll tell you what's in it for you. Your continued good health."

"Are you threatening me, Granger?"

"Why yes I am, Parkinson. How very good of you to notice. If you hurt Harry in any way, shape, or form I'll practice every pain inducing spell I know on you," Hermione finished with a hard edge and glared at the Slytherin witch.

"I'm convinced!" Blaise said as he scooped Hermione's hand up in his to shake.

"Blaise here, and you're Hermione. Nice to meet you!"

Hermione smiled, but her gaze never left Parkinson. The Slytherin opened and closed her mouth several times, unable at first, to think what to say. Finally she straightened up, her narrow eyes brightened, and she swept some of her short black hair away from her face.
"That was a very Slytherin way of getting what you want. Perhaps we can talk." Hermione was shocked when Parkinson proceeded to lace her arm with Hermione's and began pulling the Gryffindor down the stairs. "Come, Hermione. Shopping we will go and discuss this newest truce between Slytherin and Gryffindor."

Harry and Draco stepped out of the room just in time to hear the last part, and see the top of the girls' heads disappear to the floor below. Blaise turned to look at Draco and Harry.

"I believe I've just been completely surprised by a Gryffindor. There's more to Gryffs than meets the eye."

"No, just Harry's Gryffs," Draco said as he slung an arm around Harry's shoulders and they headed downstairs to join the girls.

"And what about Harry?" Blaise caught Harry's surprised movement when he said the other wizard's name, and he turned to grin at the Gryffindor.

"Yeah, what about me? Are you saying there's not more to me than meets the eye?"

"Course I'm not saying that. You're more Slytherin than anything... when you're not being an idiot." Harry smiled and relaxed under Draco's arm, once again content with the world, for the time being anyway.
Draco remained close to Harry while they walked down Diagon Alley and they were always touching, brushing their fingers together, glancing at each other and keeping calm as they spotted several Death Eaters throughout the day. Draco's actions were clear to anyone who knew him; he was publicly announcing his relationship with Harry. The message he silently announced was unmistakable. Harry Potter was protected and belonged to Draco Malfoy. Harry only found this very amusing and went along with it.

"This whole situation is strange," Blaise commented on their way to Gringotts, having spotted a number of Death Eaters in and out of the mid day shopping crowd.

"You're telling me. For the first time in sixteen years, insane men with white masks aren't after me. It's a little hard to accept."

"You don't have to accept it, Harry. You should just enjoy it for now," Hermione said, looking over her shoulder at him. She and Pansy were walking ahead, and Pansy continued to hold onto Hermione's arm, much to the Gryffindor's surprise.

Hermione surmised by the way the boys behind were grinning at them, that Pansy was doing this intentionally to show where she stood, now that Harry was momentarily free from Voldemort and the Death Eaters. Even though in Pansy's case, Hermione could tell the Slytherin had not completely come to terms with everything, yet for Draco's sake Pansy and Blaise were purposely announcing their new relationship with the Gryffindors in a very public place, just as Draco and Harry were letting the public get a firsthand look at them as a couple.

"We'll be reading about this in *The Daily Prophet* tomorrow," Harry commented as they climbed the steps to the Wizarding bank.

"That's good. I love making headlines. They better get my good side."

"Of course they will, Draco," said Harry as he leant back a bit to stare at Draco's fine arse.

"Come on, Harry. It's going to happen a lot from now on. Might as well get used to it."

"If I haven't been able to get used to it before, when there were plenty of times to do so, do you really think I'm going to start getting used to it now?"

"He's got a point there, mate," Blaise said to Draco.

Once inside the bank the group separated. The Gryffindors took one cart, while the Slytherins took another.

"Don't worry about the Galleon's today, Mione. I'm making you do this so I'll pay."

"But Harry, I couldn't let you…"
"Yes you can and I'm not taking no for an answer. What I should do is make Draco pay for us since it was his idea in the first place."

"Draco made a valid point. You know you're not going to make him pay."

"Yeah, right." Harry hopped out of the cart when it stopped outside his vault. Once inside, he filled three medium pouches with money, enough which would usually have lasted him six months. Looking around the vault before he left, he wondered what the other vault looked like. In here, there wasn't anything but money, and he hoped when he received his Inheritance the other vault might contain more personal objects belonging to the Potter family. He was eager to learn as much as he could about his family, both his father's family and his mother's biological family.

"Here, Mione." Harry handed her a filled pouch once he returned to the cart. She stared wide-eyed at it.

"Harry! This is way too much. I'm sure I'll have money left over from this."

"This is Draco we're talking about. We're putting our money in his hands basically. By the time he's finished with us, we probably won't have a penny left to our names. And by the way Blaise twitched whenever Draco or Pansy started to say something about shopping, I'm figuring Blaise has had experience shopping with those two. I think we should prepare ourselves."

Hermione snickered. "Yeah, you're probably right."

The trip back to the surface wasn't as bad as the trip down, but still, they spent the rest of the time going up in silence, clutching the edges of the cart with white knuckled fists.

"I'm never going to get used to that either," Harry commented while he and Hermione stood outside of the bank waiting for the Slytherins to finish their business. Hermione nodded in agreement; she was afraid to open her mouth as her stomach had yet to settle.

"Hermione?" she turned to look at him, concerned because he sounded anxious.

"What is it, Harry?" she moved so that they were side by side and put her head on his shoulder.

"Do you think people will listen to me? If I have something important to say, I mean."

"People have always listened to what you say, despite their opinions of you. And when you've shown everyone how strong you've gotten--"

"I'm not that strong, Hermione. I almost let the Dursleys destroy me. Sometimes, I still feel like I believe everything they ever said to me. It's hard to forget."

"You are strong, Harry. Stronger than most. You've been through a lot, yet you're still looking forward. You're becoming you, Harry, and you're finished letting people push you around. As odd as it sounds, people won't be able to keep from being drawn to you now because of that. And since Voldemort's return, you've become more popular than even Dumbledore."

Harry made a noncommittal sound and slouched against one of the columns that lined the steps of the bank, staring out at the passing crowd. He began to notice the looks shot his way, and as time passed, more people stopped to stare. Harry raised his eyebrows as the crowd began to gather.

"You see, Harry? They can't help it when it comes to you."

"Yeah, I do see." Harry pushed off the column and straightened his back and shoulders. There was
no time like the present to start showing people he intended to change. He just wished he weren't standing there in grubby jeans and a t-shirt.

"Ready, Harry?"

Harry smiled and turned to Draco, taking the hand the blond held out to him. "Yeah. Let's get to Madam Malkin's. I want to get into some robes."

Hermione beamed at him. "That's it, Harry. You'll show them."

Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions was doing very good business that day, and was simply packed by the time the group arrived. Harry frowned, not particularly fond of the idea of having to select a wardrobe with a store full of onlookers at his back. Draco began rubbing the back of Harry's neck in a motion meant to soothe. And it worked. Harry was soon boneless. He felt the need to curl up and start purring. Weird.

Draco smirked, having heard that. "Not to worry. I'll take care of this. You wait here." And then he disappeared into the store for several minutes.

"What's going on?" Harry asked Blaise.

"He enjoys this, throwing his money and power about. It's great fun for him," Blaise answered and then grinned when people started exiting the store. Soon, the departing mass of bodies trickled down to one and Draco was standing there grinning at him.

"Everything's ready, let's go." He grabbed Harry's hand and dragged the sputtering brunet into the empty store.

"How did you manage this?" Harry asked as he and the others were taken to the back of the store where three attendants stood in line to wait on them. "What did you do to get them to close the store for us?"

"I am a Malfoy, after all. If you're going to ask questions, make sure they are not stupid ones." Draco skirted out of the way just in time to miss being slapped upside his head. "Besides, all I did was drop some Galleons and mention your name. So it's really on you."

"Draco…" he groaned as Madam Malkin led Harry onto a measuring dais with Hermione taking the dais beside him. Blaise and Pansy were already running around the store with an attendant, choosing fabrics and robe designs for the two Gryffindors.

"Pansy, you cannot be serious!" Draco snapped when he saw her pick out a set of peach dress robes for Hermione. A tongue was stuck out his way, and Pansy went back to her selecting. Draco rolled his eyes then looked back up at Harry who was standing there with legs apart and his arms held out from his sides while Madam Malkin took his new measurements. His face was lined with barely restrained impatience.

"Hermione and I don't want to leave here looking like idiots, Draco. We trust you with this and if you so much as-"

"I know, Harry." Draco briskly walked away to join his fellow Slytherins, waving at his soul mate as Harry continued to rant.

"And I suggest you tell Pansy that Hermione would rather die than wear that bright green robe thingy…" Harry trailed off and his eyes widened when he realized the owner of the shop was standing only a foot away. "Oh, err…no offense, Madam Malkin."
Harry blushed and looked at Hermione, who gave him a reproachful look that quickly faded into soft giggles. But Madam Malkin wasn't offended. She found the whole ordeal incredibly amusing. Especially as she remembered Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy were enemies, everyone knew that, and now to see Gryffindors and Slytherins shopping together, and on friendly terms… it just tickled her Hufflepuff yellow. It gave her hope for the future. If those two houses could unite, what would happen if the entire Wizarding World united? What great things would happen then?

"Not to worry, Mr. Potter. I agree. Those green robes would look ghastly on Miss Granger." Madam Malkin turned to Hermione. "You're suited to more beautiful colors, dear."

"Thank you, Madam Malkin," Hermione replied, flattered. Then quietly said to Harry. "Still, you should watch what you say, Harry." Scolding finished, she jumped down from the dais as her measuring was finished. Harry was right behind her and they joined the Slytherins.

"Oh gods." Harry grabbed Hermione's arm in a death grip as his face went pale at the sight of Draco, Pansy, and Blaise standing around a large pile of clothing. "Maybe we should run, Mione. You go first, I'll cover you."

Harry was being completely serious, and when Mione didn't look like she was going to run, he took off alone making a break for the door, and was only five steps to freedom when someone grabbed him from behind.

"Let go!"

"No you don't," Draco breathed in his ear, which wasn't fair as every time Draco managed to do that, Harry lacked the ability to be able to fight against him. "Nice try. I forgot how fast you could be."

"I don't think I can stand to try on all those robes, Draco."

"You only have to try on a quarter of the garments. The rest will resize themselves with your new measurements. This will be painless."

Harry very much doubted that. Still he sighed in resignation. "Fine."

"Don't pout."

Harry scowled and took up his place beside Hermione, listening to the Slytherins argue about what the Gryffs were going to try on first.

"I can't believe you ran off without me!" Hermione nearly shrieked.

"Well you took off with Draco and left me to the Slytherins!" Harry snapped back.

"Children, no fighting now. It's bad manners to cause a scene in public," Pansy chided, coming forward to thrust some robes into Hermione's arms.

"If that's true, prepare to see a lot of bad manners in the future…” Harry disappeared into a dressing room, as well as Hermione, and Pansy looked at her best friend.

"What does he mean?"

"Harry is scheming," He answered simply. Pansy frowned and stepped closer to him.

"Listen Draco, directly after sending you that owl, my father approached me about a mission for the Dark Lord."
Draco was immediately alert; he slid on his cold mask and looked at Pansy with a stare so cold it would make even the warmest man shiver. "I'm listening."

Pansy tried to act like she wasn't affected by 'the look'. But he knew she was and that made all the difference. "No need to get defensive. That's what's so strange about all this. The Dark Lord wants me to continue our friendship. Like he thought I stopped being friends with you because of your betrayal." Pansy rolled her eyes. "I have more loyalty than that for my best friend, Draco, and you know it so you needn't look at me like that! The only reason why I'm telling you this is because the Dark Lord wanted me to. He wants you to know he's checking up on you and Potter. But that's all. All I'm supposed to do is tell him what we get up to."

"Thank you for telling me, Pansy. I need to talk to Harry about this." Though Draco had been sending Harry the information even as Pansy spoke, he knew they would have to discuss it when they were alone and in more detail.

"Why would you even think of telling him? He doesn't need to know," Pansy hissed. Beside them, Blaise sighed and looked heavenward. What was it about today that could strip all of Pansy's common sense away?

"Pansy, perhaps you are unclear as to what has happened recently," Draco began in a smooth drawl, his anger carefully concealed from everyone except Harry, whom he told to remain in the dressing room. Harry started to protest, but Draco's complete attention had returned to Pansy.

"Yes, Draco, I am unclear. You haven't told me everything." Pansy's hands went to her hips as she glared. "You've made a drastic change with yourself! It's hard to imagine you've willingly become friends with Gryffindors."

"Pansy, I've already told you...I don't keep secrets from Harry."

"It's that bond! Did you ever think that maybe this bond thing is a scheme of Dumbledore's? He must have come up with a way to brainwash you." She looked to the side as if seeing Dumbledore right there in the store making a brainwashing potion. "You would never say these things under normal circumstances!"

"Yes I would!" Draco lost hold of his patience for a moment, but quickly reined it in and lowered his voice. "I would. I do. And Dumbledore had nothing to do with Harry and me being bonded."

"I… just don't understand," Pansy said softly, shaking her head. "I need to go now." Pansy ducked her head and ran from the store.

"Dammit…"

"No worries mate." Blaise came over and gave Draco's shoulder a friendly pat. "She's just confused. Eventually, she'll see reason and get over it."

Draco knew Blaise was right. Pansy was always very stubborn and it took a lot to convince her of things. "I'll write her a long detailed letter tonight. Hey, Blaise?"

"Drake?" the two turned towards the dressing rooms when Hermione stepped out in plum colored velvet robes. She blushed a little but turned in a circle at Draco's hand signal, and laughed softly when Blaise gave her two thumbs up. They watched her disappear into the dressing room before Draco spoke again.

"I was only wondering why you're taking this so well. I can understand why Pansy is having a hard time accepting this but you're taking it too well, Blaise. Why?"
"There you go again, getting all defensive. I came on my own, Draco. I came with Pansy because I was worried about you." Blaise dropped one hand on Draco's shoulder and seconds later, a loud growl started to come from Harry's dressing room.

"Harry!"

The growling stopped. "Sorry, Hermione," came the muttered reply. And then a little more softly, yet still audible to the two Slytherins, "but Zabini needs to keep his hands off!"

Draco smirked, his eyes shining with delight at finally catching Harry displaying some of the insane possessiveness he'd been displaying recently.

"Yeah, that's why I'm taking it so well," Blaise laughed. "I've known you for years, Draco. We've slept in the same dorm room for nearly seven of those. Do you really think I never noticed you were in love with Harry Potter? I was actually kind of relieved for you when Pans and I walked into the Leaky and I saw Potter was with you as well."

Draco's mouth opened and he started to sputter. Blaise merely laughed, then quirked an eyebrow when Harry's dressing room door opened. The Gryffindor stepped out with a scowl, but Draco was more attentive to the robes he was wearing.

"Very nice, Potter." Blaise approached and dusted invisible lint off of Harry's shoulders, making a show of inspecting every inch of him. "Very nice, indeed." He looked at Draco and raised an eyebrow in appreciation.

"You will remove your hand now, Blaise."

At least he said it with a smile, Harry thought. "I'm wearing these robes out, and I'm not going to try anything else on. Hermione, you done?"

"Yes please, Harry!" Hermione fell from her dressing room with her muggle clothes already back on as if she'd just been waiting for the signal.

"You two are helpless!" Draco exclaimed, circling his soul mate, admiring the dark green robes and the way they hugged Harry in all the right places. "We haven't even started. There's loads more places to go."

"Hell no, Draco! I'm not getting any more clothes today. I don't even need all the clothes I'm getting now."

"We'll stop for today if you promise we can go out again tomorrow."

Harry wanted to decline, but he knew if Draco didn't get his way, he would keep them out all day. "Deal. Now we can go check out the Malfoy Manor library before it gets too late," Harry said as he walked to the counter where Madam Malkin waited with the bill, leaving everybody to catch up to what he was saying.

"Malfoy Manor? Harry we can't go there…"

"Why not? It's your home, right? The wards will let you in, thereby allowing me access as well. I'm sure Lucius wouldn't mind." Harry grinned at all their stupefied faces. "We're only going to the library, after all."

"Harry, the Dark Lord is there…" Blaise whispered.
"Yes, I know."

They paid their bill and departed, leaving with Madam Malkin's promise to have the rest of their purchases to the Leaky Cauldron by business closing hours.

"You've gone ill, haven't you, Harry? No one wants to go where the Dark Lord is," Blaise sputtered on their way down the street.

"I do."

"Harry, we're not going there." Draco grabbed Harry's arm and dragged him to a shadowed area beside a store. "How do we know the Dark Lord isn't luring us into a false sense of security?"

"Because Severus would have said something." Harry grinned when Draco frowned. They both knew that to be completely true, and Draco knew he was losing. Harry turned into Draco so their chests were together, and Draco shifted forward until Harry was pressed against the cobblestone wall. "We're not completely defenseless, Draco. We do have wands."

"Much good those will do against the Dark Lord…" Draco sighed and pressed his face against Harry's neck. "You're being an idiot Gryffindor again. This will not end well."

Draco cursed. He was inside the Entrance Hall of his home, Malfoy Manor. Half of him was happy to be home but the other half, the part he was paying more attention to, was telling him to stupefy Harry and drag him back to the Leaky Cauldron. How did he let the idiot Gryffindor manipulate him into this? Ah, right. It had been the short snogging session in the alleyway, which Harry instigated by setting his hands to roam free all over Draco's body. Really, how was Draco supposed to think clearly with Harry trying to overcome his will with his hands and mouth?

Never heard you complain once.

If I did that I'd be an idiot like you, wouldn't I?

"Draco? Whatever are you doing here, darling?"

Draco mentally cursed and turned to look at Narcissa Malfoy. His forced smile faded when he saw whom his mother was standing next to. Unconsciously, Draco shifted to block Harry from view.

"Hello, Mother. Aunt Bellatrix. I'm surprised to see you here," Draco replied coldly, silver eyes narrowed dangerously. "I thought you were in Egypt, or was it France this time? I can never remember."

"We're more surprised than you, darling," Narcissa responded, quirking an eyebrow at her son's healthy and rather glowing appearance. Lucius had told her their son had been having a hard time of it. She hadn't really cared but Narcissa did wonder why her son looked so much stronger and more assured than before. Why had Lucius lied to her?

"Who is your little friend, Draco?" Bellatrix asked, walking towards them. "And why are you hiding him?"

Draco wanted to pull his wand, imagining several bad scenarios unfolding if his aunt were to see Harry.

Don't panic. That's the last thing we need to do. Lestrange is not going to attack me here. She loves Voldemort too much to go against his wishes.
How do you know so much about her?

I've had years to study my enemies. I know a lot more than you think I do about Voldemort and his supporters.

It took a moment, but Draco finally moved. Both Narcissa and Bellatrix approached, both with narrowed eyes. Narcissa was frowning at Harry, but Bellatrix was grinning.

"And who are you?" It was obvious she was delighted to see fresh meat she could get her claws into.

Harry wanted to smirk. He knew he looked different with the longer hair, the new wizard robes on, and without his glasses. And he made sure his hair hung low over his brow, concealing his scar, so it was amusing to see neither witch recognized him. Not until Bellatrix leaned in to stare into his eyes. Harry remained perfectly still and kept his eyes blank, and reveled in the shock appearing in Lestrange's eyes when she finally realized who he was.

"Well, well, well…." Lestrange looked delighted, but she backed away at the same time, wariness creeping into her eyes. "If it isn't little Harry Potter. My, how you've changed. Hasn't he, Cissa?"

"Yes, he has." She pinned her son with a hard stare. "Draco, why have you brought him here?"

"He really had no choice, Mrs. Malfoy," Harry replied.

Draco recognized the changed tone and wanted to squeeze his eyes shut. Harry was getting into that mode where he took charge of the situation and Draco found him irresistible whenever that happened. Now, finally, it was up close and personal but now was definitely not the time to be thinking about dragging his soul mate to the floor right in front of his mother and aunt, even if he didn't like either woman and didn't give a shit about what they thought of him anymore.

"You forced my son here?" Narcissa looked startled.

"Not exactly…" Harry started to smirk and Draco discreetly stepped on his foot.

"And why are you here?" Bellatrix asked lowly. She had an itch to wrap her hands around Potter's throat and her nephew looked like he knew it too the way he was staring at back at her while fingering his wand. Bellatrix had to admit it was a delightful change for her nephew, to seem so assured around her now. Of course Potter knew because those expressive green eyes told her so. There was no fear in them, only the returned thoughts of wanting to do her harm. He seemed darker somehow, and the power coming off him wasn't the same as she remembered last time they'd met. It's wasn't completely that nauseating light magic anymore. Interesting. It was a neutral that bordered on Dark.

"We need to use the library."

"The library? Whatever for, darling?"

"That's our business," Harry said firmly.

"Is Father here?" Draco asked before Narcissa was allowed to react to Harry's bluntness.

"Lucius is in his study with our Lord," She replied with a sniff and was surprised when Potter grinned.

"Lovely! Can you have them informed we are here? We'll be in the library."
Draco went along with Harry, understanding the need for a show of unity, and it was well worth it when he glanced at the two witches as he and Harry walked away. He'd never seen Bellatrix Lestrange speechless before, and his mother looked outraged. Yet they did nothing. Harry and Draco were allowed to go on as if they owned the place.

Draco looked at Harry from the corner of his eye. "This isn't about going to the library, is it?"

Harry snorted. "When have I ever liked going to the library? Hermione had to threaten me anytime she wanted me to go." They spoke quietly, and paused every time a Death Eater passed them. Harry’s wonderment grew as each and every one of the Death Eaters passed without making moves to attack. There were even a few who greeted Harry and Draco by surname. "No, this is about the game Voldemort has developed. I want to know what he's playing at."

"Rushing into things is not the best way to go about it…" Draco held his hand up as if to stop his own thoughts. "Oh, right, this is Gryffindor's Golden Boy I'm talking to."

"Funny," Harry deadpanned, earning him a smirk. "We're here now, so it doesn't matter. And you're doing this with me, so doesn't that make you part Gryffindor?" Harry snickered when he felt Draco's outrage. "Maybe not. I wouldn't like you very much if you were a Gryffindor anyway." Harry looked into surprised silver eyes. "I prefer you as a cunning ambitious snake."

"If we weren't within one hundred feet of the Dark Lord, I would drag you to my room, lock the door, and the library would be forgotten."

"I really hadn't planned on going to the library in the first place-" Harry gasped when he was pulled into an alcove and Draco pressed against him.

"Not the point," Draco hissed.

"No. No, I feel your point," Harry moaned as Draco's growl echoed in his ears and he thrust his own hips forward. And then Draco's hand slid down into his pants and Harry had to bite back a cry when those long pale fingers brushed against his cock.

"But…I thought…" Harry's eyes rolled to the back of his head when Draco took him entirely into his grasp and began moving his hand in a torturous pace. "…not…good idea…Voldemort…Mmm, Draco."

Draco stared at Harry's mouth. Wet lips, partially opened called to him, and when he saw a pink tongue dart out to wet those lips, Draco lunged and captured Harry's tongue with his mouth and began to suck on it, drawing out the sexiest mewling noises Draco had ever heard. He spent minutes doing just that; sucking, licking, and kissing noises from Harry's throat while he continued to caress Harry's cock at a leisurely pace.

When Draco pulled back, Harry let his head fall back against the stone wall, hearing nothing but his heavy breathing and feeling nothing but Draco in his mind and his hands on his body. He couldn't stop the cry from escaping his lips when he suddenly felt his pants drop and Draco's mouth took the place of his hand. Harry's hands fist in the cloth on Draco's shoulders, but quickly traveled up to sink into the soft blond hair as Draco eagerly brought Harry over the edge.

Harry tried to thrust forward, but Draco's hands held him firmly in place, enjoying Harry's frustration at not being able to set the pace. The Slytherin was very talented with his tongue and soon he had Harry screaming as he came. Draco shuddered as he swallowed Harry's orgasm, through the bond feeling all of Harry's pleasure, and he exploded in a mind numbing force after being slaughtered by both his lust and Harry's overwhelming reaction. That was a first. Coming without having been
touched at all.

For a minute they couldn't move, Draco had to lean his head against Harry's thigh to regain his breath. Harry's eyes were closed and his head was still thrown back, and when Draco looked he swore he could see the pulse at his throat throbbing wildly.

_Fuck!_ Harry hissed, not realizing he was speaking Parseltongue. _Fuck, that's never felt so good!_

He gasped when Draco, who happened to feel a very positive effect from the hissing noises, was suddenly ravaging his mouth. Draco's teeth, lengthening without notice, sank into Harry's bottom lip and his knees went weak when he tasted the rush of blood flow into both their mouths. It was as if something took over their minds with that first heady taste of blood, and there was only one thing they wanted.

"I'm taking you to my bed," Draco panted against his mouth.

"Here, right now." Harry rubbed his hard cock against Draco's to prove his point. Both wondered how they could even be so hard again after just having a release. They were not complaining.

"No. I want you in my bed!" Draco hissed. His eyes glazed with the building lust, driving them both crazy with the need to consummate the bond.

**Draco, I want you now! Right now!**

Harry had managed to relieve Draco of his outer robes, and the top buttons of his black silk shirt popped off as Harry ripped the shirt open to reveal Draco's pale toned torso. Harry's tongue started a slow descent of exploration, starting at the shell of Draco's ear. _Here. Now._ Even though Draco couldn't understand Parseltongue, the message was clear, and he wasn't in the right frame of mind to resist. Perhaps, under the circumstances, it was fortunate they froze their movements when a shout echoed throughout the hallway and the alcove they sequestered themselves in.

"Lucius!" There were rapid footfalls on the dark marble floor.

"Ah, Severus. Let me guess," came the reply of Lucius and Harry's eyes went wide with surprise because the voice came from very near the entrance of the alcove. "You're looking for Draco and Potter, aren't you?"

Harry's suspicions were confirmed when Severus' footsteps came to stop just outside of their hideaway and they began fixing their clothing and hair, both extremely pissed that they'd been interrupted, again.

"Yes. I was told they've come here," Severus silky voice was low with the threat of pain when he found the boys.

"Here they are. Boys? Care to explain to us why you're here?"

Harry groaned and rubbed his face with his hands. _He was listening to us?_ My father is a pervert! Draco sounded outraged and horrified.

_No wonder Sirius had a thing for him._

"You know where they are?" Severus asked.

Harry squared his shoulders and prepared to meet his doom. It was funny. He wasn't afraid of Death
Eaters or Voldemort, but he was afraid of his uncle. Severus Snape could always get under his skin.

"Here," he sulked and walked out of the shadows of the alcove. Severus raised an eyebrow at the state he and Draco were in, and their flushed faces had yet to return to normal. It wasn't hard to figure out what they were doing, especially since their lips were red and swollen and they both still had a far off look about them.

"What the fuck did you think you were doing, coming here? Both of you!" Severus immediately barked.

Harry gaped at the man a moment, surprised by Severus' choice of words. Then he straightened his back bone. "I want to know why he was eavesdropping!" he demanded, pointing to Lucius, trying to get out of a lecture for as long as possible. In his mind he heard Draco laugh at his obvious attempt at subterfuge.

Lucius Malfoy did not look apologetic, in fact he was smirking. "This is my home, Potter. The fault is your own for not taking yourselves off to somewhere more private."

"I tried that," Draco murmured.

**Hussssh...**

Draco glared at Harry after he made a fool out of himself by trembling in front of his father and Severus.

"Excuse me, I would like an answer. Miss Granger came to me in a fit state, claiming you two had come here...and I trusted her to keep an eye on you!"

"It wasn't Hermione's fault!" Draco quickly said, trying to keep the Gryffindor witch in good graces with his godfather. Lucius' mouth nearly dropped open when Draco started to stand up for a Mudblood. Harry glared at him as if he knew exactly what Lucius was thinking. "We were going no matter what she did, and we had to stun her before we could go."

"You stunned her?" Severus hissed and took a threatening step forward. Lucius raised an eyebrow, but said nothing.

"She was going to stun us first! Blaise helped us out by distracting her with a tickling spell. We stunned her and left before she could chase after us. It's not like we left her alone stunned and we were coming here no matter what," Harry explained.

"Why?"

Harry and Draco looked at each other and thought about whether they ought to tell the truth or make something up. It didn't take long to come to a decision. "I wanted to poke around and see what I could see," said Harry with a shrug.

"I never knew you had a sense of humor, Potter. I found that quite funny."

"He's not joking, Father."

"Voldemort has basically given me an invitation, right Lucius? By having Pansy tell us her purpose for him."

"Not exactly an invitation, Harry," Lucius said slowly. If Potter were determined to use his first name, then Lucius would do the same. Besides, it wasn't as if he wouldn't be seeing a lot of him. And he
did owe him. Might as well get to know the boy if he planned to cultivate him into a proper spouse for his son.

"But it is. And I wanted to see how serious Voldemort is about not killing me. I couldn't see a better way than marching up to Malfoy Manor and looking around."

"You should have told me first and then owled Lucius. The Dark Lord is here now."

"Should we be worried?" Draco asked, crossing his arms over his chest. "I thought we were free. This is my home, after all. I was not told to stay away, Father. It's only natural that I bring Harry home with me at some point."

"You two have some nerve…." Severus started.

"Together, yes they do."

"Some things don't need thorough examining," Harry said, studying his cuticles in pure Draco fashion.

Draco shrugged his shoulders in a Harry move, horrifying his father. "He's right. Harry was very convincing about this."

"I'm sure he was…" Lucius drawled, looking the younger wizards up and down. Harry lost his cool and started blushing and earned the Malfoy's patented Silver Smirk.

"Well now your journey has come to a close. We have things to discuss at my manor." Severus turned to Lucius. "As Draco's father, you'll most likely want to be there as well."

"Is this about the bond?" Harry asked.

"Finally," Draco huffed when his godfather nodded.

"You may not be so eager once we're through," Severus replied gravely, effectively putting a damper on Harry and Draco's good mood. Lucius studied them for a moment before nodding.

"I'll meet you in the Entrance Hall. The Dark Lord awaits word on why these two are here. I doubt I'll be long."

Severus led Harry and Draco down one direction of the hallway, while Lucius went the opposite direction.

I wanted to see your bed-err, room. Harry's face was gloomy when Draco looked at him. The blond grinned and wrapped an arm around Harry's shoulders. Harry immediately leaned into the warmth of his soul mate.

Oh, we're coming back. Now that I know we aren't going to die upon sight, we're definitely coming back.

Harry brightened at the promise. And then he laughed. "Should we have told Lucius about Sirius being there? He doesn't know Sirius is my godfather, does he?"

"No, we're not going to tell him," Draco hissed. "I can't wait to see the look on his face." He smirked maliciously. "We should have someone hide in the shadows with a camera."

"Are you holding a grudge?"
"Damn straight, I am."

"Why didn't you tell him about Sirius?" Harry asked his uncle. Severus snorted.

"Severus has a deeply twisted sense of humor," Draco told him.

They arrived at the Entrance Hall then, relieved to find it empty of Death Eaters. As relieved as Harry was to be able to walk around free, it was unnerving and it was another thing Harry wasn't sure he'd get used to. That is if it lasted long enough for him to get used to it. There was no telling what Voldemort was up to.

Lucius didn't take long at all to return to them, and before the young wizards could ask their questions, they were rushed off to Snape Manor. There the meeting was to be convened in the Family Parlor. Sirius had yet to arrive so they waited for him there while drinking tea.

"I can't believe you have a Family Parlor," Harry said to Severus.

"Why not?"

"Don't sound so offended, Sev. I've often wondered the same. It's not like you're a family man, after all," Lucius pointed out, and then glanced at the old grandfather clock standing beside the fireplace. 
"Weren't we going to discuss something, Severus."

"As soon as the last member of our party arrives."

"Who might that be?"

"Harry's godfather," Draco answered.

"And who is that? You are deliberately stalling."

Someone Apparated in down the hall. "Oi!"

"I'll retrieve him. Never imagined I would ever allow him past my wards," Severus murmured as he stood to find his undesired guest and lead him back to the parlor.

If Severus, Harry, and Draco were expecting to see a grand reaction from the two former lovers, they were very much disappointed. Sirius walked in behind Severus and immediately spotted Lucius. He halted in his stride and stared at the lithe form of his ex-lover. Lucius' eyes widened in surprise for a only a split moment before they fell to half mast. "Black." He crossed his legs at his ankles and relaxed back against the sofa, watching Sirius carefully through heavy lidded eyes.

Sirius' eyes narrowed. "Malfoy," he spat back with venom and proceeded to take the farthest seat away from Lucius, which happened to be beside the two-seat sofa Harry and Draco occupied. Lucius' smirk grew as Sirius sat and went on to ignore him.

Ha! Your godfather is mad at my father. I wonder what happened.

Do you think they had to break up when your family made the arranged marriage? I can see Sirius staying mad about something like that. Especially if the relationship was serious.

I haven't a clue about any of it. My father failed to tell me he once had a male lover.

Harry felt Draco's resentment rising and began to play with his fingers. *Draco, you told me Lucius is sorry for that. Besides, he's here now to show you support for whatever Severus is about to tell us. At least he's trying.*
Draco didn't reply, but he did relax and let Harry continue to play with his fingers.

"Harry, your birthday is next week. And until that time, the unbreakable, non-negotiable magical bond that you're under cannot go into the last stages of completion."

"Unbreakable? Non-negotiable? We're bonded forever then?" Harry asked heatedly; not upset by this fact and happy to know Draco felt the same way. But he was upset that this was a major thing to happen to a person, especially when it happens without said persons knowledge or consent. That's what ignited Harry's temper. "Who comes up with this shite? Do bonds like these just pop up out of nowhere and pick random unsuspecting victims?"

"Well yeah, basically," Sirius said.

"It's a bit more complicated than that," Lucius said, not being prepared for the conversation topic but still knowing a bit about soul mate bonds. "Soul mate bonds are only attracted to those with power enough to handle them. Muggles will never go through a bond transition like the one you're going through. Yes, they can find their soul mates and there would be a connection, but there would be no actual bond. They cannot talk telepathically, nor be empathic to their partners as strongly as you two are."

Harry pushed to his feet and started to pace back and forth in front of the fire, a scowl on his face. Draco sat back and because he was thinking the same as Harry, he didn't try and calm his mate down. Besides, he so enjoyed watching the fire light up Harry's emerald eyes when the Gryffindor was on a tirade. It was all that power thrumming around Harry; spiraling, coiling, and pushing out in waves...Draco had always been affected by Harry's emotions, one way or another, but now when it happened, Draco just wanted to shove him against the nearest wall and snog the Gryffindor senseless. And snog was the lightest term possible for what Draco really wanted to do.

Harry abruptly stopped pacing and stared wide eyed at Draco, who merely lifted an eyebrow, smiled and continued to send Harry images of what he'd like to do to Harry's body. He hadn't realized he was sending, but wasn't bothered when it became apparent that he was. And then his mouth went dry when Harry's eyes changed from cold anger to a burning pit of desire. He should be used to it, but Draco couldn't stop the gasp that left him when Harry sent him his desire full force. Dropping his eyes to the ground, Draco shifted in his seat, trying to ignore his full hard on.

"Would you like to hear what happens on Harry's birthday?" Sirius asked, grinning madly, apparently over the fact that Lucius was in the same room with him. "Or should we leave the two of you alone?"

"Padfoot..." Harry looked pained, but he did sit back down. He chose a seat away from Draco. He had the urge to crawl in Draco's lap and wasn't sure he had the power to restrain himself. When seated, Harry nodded to his godfather and uncle, ready to hear what else they had to say.

"In a week you will receive your full powers, Harry, and both of you will go through changes that come from having this particular bond."

"What changes? Which particular bond?" Draco thought this was where the bad news was going to rear its ugly head.

"We'll get to that in a moment." Draco glared at Severus, who seemed to want to take his bloody time telling them about the bad news. "It's been written that once one of the partners of the bond reaches adulthood, the bond will activate completely for both, even if the other partner hasn't reached their majority. The reason why you two can communicate with your minds already is because you are both powerful wizards." Severus stopped his explanation and looked to Black, who was now
glaring at Lucius, apparently no longer in the mind to just ignore his ex lover. Severus wasn't going to get support from that side of the room.

"Moreover," he went on, "the transformation should begin at midnight on the thirty-first and I'm afraid the process will be painful."

"Of course it will," Harry muttered darkly.

"Are you going to tell me what you mean by changes and transformations?" Draco demanded.

"Yes, I'm curious about that as well. Are you saying my son is going to turn into something?"

Severus and Sirius exchanged an uncertain look. Severus picked up a book lying on the table beside his chair. "This book can explain far better than I can. Because of the type of bond you have, there is relatively little information. We'll be learning as we go along." He handed the book to Draco.

"You mean as Draco and I go along." Harry moved to sit beside Draco again and leaned over to get a better view of the title, which read, *Rare Bonds And How To Spot Them* by Miranda Hobbleglobe. Draco held his breath and opened to the page Severus had book marked. He and Harry stared at the chapter title in horror.

"Magical Creature bond? Is this a joke?" Draco asked faintly.

"Creatures…? This is a joke, right?" Harry asked, wide eyes shooting over to Severus. "This has to be a joke!"

"I'm afraid not, Harry."

"Please tell me we're not going to turn into Flesh Eating Slugs or centaurs or something," Harry begged with wide eyes.

"No, pup. It would be something like sirens, vampires, Elves, Veela, fairies," Sirius had the nerve to grin at them here. "Or even dragons…"

"Dragons?" Harry and Draco yelled, both going pale.

"Not exactly dragons. It's more complicated than just turning into a Hungarian Horntail," Sirius explained unhelpfully.

Lucius actually smiled. "I see you haven't changed."

"No one asked you, Malfoy!"

"I think I'm going to be sick," Harry whispered.

"The bond can also mix creatures to come up with a new species," Severus reluctantly added.

"Definitely going to be sick." Harry only managed to say this before he regurgitated the contents of his lunch all over his new shoes.

Draco cleaned up the mess with a wave of his wand and began rubbing Harry's back in soothing circles, all the while glaring at Severus and Sirius.

"It's not our fault!" Sirius exclaimed under that glare.

"So we could become some freakish half-breed creatures, is that what you're saying?"
"It's entirely possible," Severus replied with a heavy sigh. This seemed worse than having to tell a child their parents were being tortured. The looks on their faces portrayed their fear. "Will we even be wizards anymore?" Harry asked in a small voice.

"We can't determine that until the thirty-first for sure. But you will be magical." "Is there anything else, Severus?" Lucius asked, leaning forward in concern. Harry continued to stare at the floor, looking horribly pale, shaking and with a stricken look on his face. Lucius wondered what he was thinking. "It says, depending on what we're turning into, that our power will increase; also the amount depending upon the transformation," Draco read from the book, always looking for the advantage. "I don't want any more power! I've just gotten used to what I do have." Harry's voice shook along with his hands. Everyone looked at him in concern. "Harry?"

"I'm okay, Draco," He whispered back, and allowed Draco to pull him against his chest, so they were both lounging back on the sofa. Harry buried his face in Draco's chest and squeezed his eyes closed. He was so afraid. They were going to turn into freaks, just like Vernon Dursley always said he was. Draco's arms tightened around him until he was sure his ribs would break. Stop thinking like that, idiot Gryffindor. We're not going to turn into freaks. Besides, that pig man and his family are the only freaks I know.

Lucius stood up suddenly, seeing the distress his son and Harry were in. Well, especially Potter. He didn't know the boys entire story, Severus had yet to fill him in, but there was something going on with Harry, and everyone in the room knew about it except him, which wasn't something he was fond of, being in the dark.

"Severus, whiskey should be in order right about now."

"That's the first good idea you've had, ever," Sirius sniped at Lucius.

If Draco weren't so worried about Harry, he would have found this funny, as his father merely grinned at Black, who quickly turned his head away and glared at the ground.

Severus summoned his Firewhiskey and passed out five glasses, each with a good portion of whiskey. Harry stared at his for a moment before knocking it back in one go. "I don't feel any better," Harry murmured. He turned over so he could lay on Draco, stomach to stomach and hooked his hands behind Draco's neck before burying his face in the blond's hair and closing his eyes.

"You really shouldn't have given him that. His stomach's empty remember?"

"Hmmm." Severus studied his nephew curled up in Draco's arms. "He'll get food and one of his nourishment potions when I return you to the Leaky Cauldron."

*I don't want to hear any more, Draco.*

Draco couldn't be sure if Harry was talking about information on the bond, or he just didn't want to hear anything at the moment. He turned worried eyes on his godfather as he wrapped his arms more
securely around Harry. Before anything could be done, Draco felt Harry's magic come together in a concentrated area around the two of them, releasing an unnatural wind throughout the parlor. A moment later, there was a pop and Harry and Draco were no longer in Snape Manor.

"What just happened?" Sirius barked, jumping to his feet.

"Harry Apparated them."

"That's impossible. He's never been taught!" Sirius pushed his hands through his hair and began to pace.

"They've probably splinched themselves," Lucius commented dryly.

Sirius spun around on him. "That's right, Luce," he growled. "You've always got something positive to say. Shows everyone how much you care, right?"

Lucius' gray eyes darkened. "You never listened long enough to hear, did you?"

Sirius' nostrils flared in fury. "Are you really going to stand there and try to BLAME ME?" the Animagus roared.

Severus sighed and rolled his eyes. "Now is not the time for this. We need to find Harry and Draco."

"You've lost them?" Remus appeared in the doorway looking more ragged than usual. "Not good." Remus lent against the doorframe and took a deep breath.

"Moony, what's wrong? Something happen?" Sirius ignored Lucius and went over to Remus, who began nodding.

"You've just come from the Order, I assume. What has Dumbledore decided to do?" Severus asked with an acute sense of dread. Remus straightened and looked at the other wizards.

"He plans to 'secure' Harry and Draco and take them to a safe house. One only he knows about. Towards the end of the meeting Moody charged in and exploded, yelling about how Harry voluntarily went to Malfoy Manor." He looked at Lucius, who nodded. "He and Dumbledore are making their way to the Leaky Cauldron now."

"Why didn't you go straight there?" Lucius demanded.

"Because, Malfoy, I thought they would be here. This is where Severus said they would be."

"We need to get to the Leaky Cauldron. Harry and Draco, by some miracle, would have gone there if anywhere when they Apparated. Lucius you can't be seen in Diagon Alley by Moody or Dumbledore or they'll assume you're involved and try to capture you." Lucius coldly glared at Severus for his lack of faith in a Malfoy. "Return to Malfoy Manor and I'll send word when I've found them." Severus said as they all walked to the Apparition point.

"Where will you take them once you've found them?" Remus asked. There weren't many options at this point. Not many places Dumbledore wouldn't think to look.

"Until something else has been found, they'll have to stay at Malfoy Manor."

"What?"

"Remus, it's the only place safe enough from Dumbledore. He will not go there and even if he does, he would have no luck getting through the ancient Malfoy wards," Sirius confirmed, though the idea
left a bad taste in his mouth.

"You can't be serious? What about You-Know-Who?"

"The Dark Lord will not touch them," Lucius assured. "He was more curious than anything about them earlier, and not one Death Eater looked at them in any wrong way." Sirius snorted at that. "Fine, I concede. Some of the wizards would like revenge for being beaten by a child time and again, but they've restrained themselves on the Dark Lord's orders. The boys will be safe."

"At this point we have no other choice," Severus said, then he Apparated to the Leaky Cauldron.

"And we really allowing this?" Remus asked his long time friend. Sirius and Lucius' eyes locked.

"My godson will be safe there? Do you promise?"

"Why should I promise? Would you believe me?"

Sirius jaw clenched tightly before he reluctantly nodded. This seemed to mean something to Malfoy, Remus saw, because Draco's father's shoulders relaxed minutely and he smirked. Remus was amazed to see that it more resembled a smile.

"Yes, I promise. Harry will be safe with Draco at the manor."

After this was said, Sirius nodded and Apparated without another word.

Lucius stared at where Sirius had just been. "He hasn't forgiven me…" He was speaking more to himself but Remus decided he wanted a word in as he'd been there to pick up the pieces of Sirius' shattered heart and put his friend back together again.

"Would you?" he asked roughly, staring at Lucius blank look. When he didn't get an answer, Remus glared before Apparating away, leaving Lucius alone with his thoughts.
Miss Ginevra Weasley was a girl on a mission. Having been at the Order headquarters during the scheduled meeting, she naturally eavesdropped in, using her brothers' wonderful invention the Extendable Ears. Much of the meeting had to do with the Death Eaters peculiar behavior, such as the raids on Muggles which had momentarily stopped, as well as the Death Eaters roaming around as if there never was a war. Many of the Death Eaters had no official accusations put upon them and could not be apprehended by Aurors without any real evidence. This news seemed to displease Dumbledore and Ginny had been surprised to hear the anger and frustration emanating from the old headmaster's voice. Soon the Order began to discuss Harry and she found herself unable to believe what she was hearing.

"It seems the ordeal Harry Potter went through not long ago has stripped his good senses away… He must be dealt with before he puts himself or others in any more danger."

"Albus, what are you saying?" Ginny recognized Professor McGonagall's voice. The Transfiguration Professor's voice was hard edged, as if she were mad at the headmaster.

"He's left the safety of the Order and has taken up residence in the Leaky Cauldron."

"I don't see how that constitutes being called insane, Dumbledore." Ginny silently cheered when she recognized Charlie's voice. "Harry has been through a lot. This time he nearly didn't survive and probably wouldn't have if not for Malfoy. Harry probably wants time away to think."

"Charlie is right." Ah, there was Remus. "Harry's only wanting some space and time."

"And you know this for sure, Remus?" Dumbledore continued. "Voldemort may be changing his tactics, but that is no reason to relax our guard and allow a boy who has far too much information about the Order to stay alone unguarded. It's madness and it cannot be allowed to continue."

"What are you suggesting?" This came from Kingsley Shacklebolt. "Should we send Harry to Azkaban as well?" Ginny's eyebrows rose in surprise. Shacklebolt sounded calm as always, but there seemed to be some underlining accusation.

"Now is not the time to jest!"

And that was the second time Ginny heard Dumbledore lose his patience. She wondered if Shacklebolt knew about Dumbledore's orders to send Sirius to Azkaban without a trial. It angered her that Dumbledore was trying to do the same thing Ron was doing. Making people think Harry was losing his mind. It was clear now that Harry wasn't going to do what Dumbledore expected; the headmaster was beginning to fear. 

Mad Eye Moody burst into the meeting room and Ginny held her breath as she listened to him go on about Harry and Draco having a lovely visit at Malfoy Manor. She remained completely frozen; positive Moody would catch her with his creepy eye. But Moody had worked himself up into such a state that it seemed he forgot his own rule about constant vigilance. Dumbledore sounded nearly
happy to receive the news, and Ginny was sure he was trying to hide it from the Order members. Now he had the perfect opportunity and reason to get to Harry without any of the Order opposing him. Ginny listened on with bated breath as Dumbledore ordered that Harry and Draco should be found and taken to a safe house immediately. Clearly, to Ginny, Dumbledore was up to something else if he'd involved Draco in this. Draco didn't know anything about the Order beyond its location. But he couldn't give that over to Voldemort since he wasn't the Secret Keeper. So why did he want Draco captured as well? And Ginny was annoyed that no one else thought to question Dumbledore on it.

Dumbledore and Moody were going to Apparate to the Leaky Cauldron after they wrapped up the meeting, which Ginny thought should give her time to Floo to the Cauldron before them. She tried walking down the stairs in a casual way, in case somebody came upon her, but at the same time tried to keep her movements quick and stealthy. Ginny accredited her successful mission to the kitchen on the fact that she had to grow up sneaking around six brothers in a house that groaned and moaned with every movement. She wasted no time and quickly grabbed the Floo Powder to throw into the fire. She jumped into the green flames and was relieved to see no one would see her leave. "The Leaky Cauldron!"

She tumbled her way out of the fireplace and immediately went for the stairs once she'd picked herself off the floor. Glancing over on her way, she caught sight of Hermione in a booth near the large fireplace in the table area.

"Hermione!" She made a sharp turn and nearly knocked down an old wizard with stringy gray hair and a bulbous nose. "Sorry!" She kept going and ignored the wizard's scowl. She came up to Hermione's table and slapped her hand down upon it.

"Hermione! Harry and Draco are in trouble!" It was only then she noticed someone else was at the table, and when she looked, did a double take. "Bloody hell, Zabini! What happened to your eye?"

She eyed him curiously. Zabini made some very delicious eye candy and Ginny didn't mind taking a closer look. More than curious, Zabini didn't even glance her way, but instead was glaring at Hermione. He was squinting his right eye in a way that seemed very painful, as well as the area around the eye which was a purple bruise marring his lovely dark caramel skin.

"Hermione, did you do this?" Ginny leaned forward and pressed her fingers against the bruised skin. "I bet this hurts, doesn't it?" Zabini's eyes flicked over to meet hers and Ginny felt that exciting thrill she always got when her heart skipped a beat.

"Ginny, what were you saying about Harry and Draco?"

"Oh right." Ginny dropped her hand and then bumped her hip into Zabini in order to get him to move over. Only instead of scooting over, Zabini fell over and remained there. Stiff as a board.

"You didn't stun him?"

"He allowed Harry and Draco to stun me. I simply retaliated," Hermione said angrily, glaring at the Slytherin.

"Why don't you release him already?"

"Ginny, tell me what's happened! Harry and Draco rushed off to Malfoy Manor like idiots…. I don't know what's happened!"

"They were fine at Malfoy Manor, I believe. But of course Dumbledore is concerned over the
secrecy and security of the Order and doesn't want Harry or Draco to be able to run free. Or at least that's what he told the Order. But we both know he just wants to keep tight control of Harry, which is why he also wants Draco." Ginny pulled Zabini back into a sitting position and carefully slid him over against the wall so she could squeeze in beside him. "We need to warn them. The Headmaster and Moody are on their way here now to take them away somewhere."

Ginny became confused when Hermione sighed in relief.

"Harry and Draco aren't here. Severus was supposed to find them," Hermione explained.

"Not here?" Ginny sat back and blew out her breath. "Thank Merlin for that! I did my best to get here as fast as I could without anyone seeing me."

"You've always been an amazing Gryffindor," Hermione said kindly.

Ginny smiled brightly and pulled out her wand. "Glad you think so. I'm going to go one step further, make like Harry, and be a hero." She pointed her wand at Blaise. "Finite Incantatum."

"Two and a half hours!" Blaise burst out as soon as he could move, scowling at Hermione. "You kept me immobile for two and a half hours!"

"Don't hiss at me, Slytherin. It was your fault Harry and Draco got away. You deserved what I gave you."

"I didn't deserve the black eye!" Blaise snapped. He then turned to Ginny and grinned at her, showing off pearly white teeth against dark skin. "And yeah, it does hurt. Thanks."

Ginny sighed. "You're really very pretty, Zabini."

"I think otherwise," Hermione went on to Blaise, rolling her eyes at Ginny.

Blaise pulled his eyes away from the beautiful redhead and frowned at Hermione. "Look. Draco's my best friend. He tells me to distract you; I'm going to do it. I only hit you with a tickling charm and I never hit or stunned you!"

"Hermione, you may have gone overboard," Ginny snickered, and her friend blushed.

"I was angry," Hermione mumbled. "Professor Snape told me to make sure the boys stayed out of trouble."

"There you go, Zabini. You started to make me feel sorry for you, but it's your own fault for getting Mione angry."

"Forgive me, but have we met? You look like a Weasley," Blaise said, changing the subject easily when he realized he wouldn't be winning this argument.

"I am a Weasley. Ginny Weasley." She held out her hand and they shook. Hermione rolled her eyes again when Ginny fluttered her lashes. "I figured I'd be seeing you soon enough since Harry and Draco are together now."

"What an unbelievable and delightful coincidence!" Blaise exclaimed, grinning.

"Isn't it? Here, let me heal that eye for you." Ginny was glad she'd listened to Fred and George when they taught her healing spells. The twins were always in need of healing when they were off inventing dangerous things.
"You two are the biggest flirts I've ever met." Hermione stood up, preparing to leave them to it when suddenly there was a pop. Across the room, someone fell out of thin air and crashed into a table. "That's Draco!" she cried when noticing the pale blond hair of the wizard who'd just Apparated onto the table. She, Ginny, and Blaise hurried over and peered down at their dazed friend.

"Draco, mate! Are you all there?" asked Blaise as he patted his friend's face. Draco's eyes were closed, but he was alive and awake, as was told by the loud groans coming from him.

"I forgot he can be such a baby," Ginny murmured, waving away the curious witches and wizards who had started to gather round.

"Yeah, he always goes over the top. Merlin, that hippogriff episode…" Blaise looked as if he would go on and Ginny looked completely absorbed by whatever may come from his mouth, so Hermione snapped their attention back to the situation at hand by knocking them both upside the head.

"Come on! We have to get Draco up, find Harry, and get out of here as quickly as possible. Dumbledore will be here any minute."

"Where's Harry?"

Draco's eyes popped open and he sat up, his pains immediately forgotten over his worry for his soul mate.

_**Harry?**_

**Draco? Thank Merlin, I thought I killed you!**

_**Where are you?**_ Draco stood up and had to steady himself by grabbing onto Blaise until the world righted itself and he could walk without seeing triple.

_**The Leaky Cauldron, my room.**_

"He's upstairs. Did you say Dumbledore is coming?"

"Yes, and he wants to take you and Harry away." Hermione looked around as they moved and her gaze landed on the bar. It didn't take her long to come up with an idea.

"Go get Harry. Start thinking about what we're going to do." The others nodded and headed upstairs, while Hermione headed towards the bar. She stood at the end, away from the wizards and witches already there, and waited for Tom to come her way.

"Wha can I get for ya, Miss Granger?" Hermione motioned for him to come closer, and he leaned forward.

"Could you possibly do myself and Harry a favor?" she asked quietly, keeping a look out at the door and Floo area.

"A favor for Mr. Potter? Of course!" Hermione resisted rolling her eyes.

"Someone is going to come looking for us very soon. Could you, perhaps, forget which rooms you've given to us? We only need a little time."

"Of course, Miss Granger."

"Thank you, Tom. I'm sure Harry will be very pleased with you," she added with a bright smile
"An honor, Miss Granger. An honor."

Hermione ran upstairs, hoping Tom would still feel the same when he realized Dumbledore was the one to be distracted. She gave it a fifty percent chance Tom would immediately inform Dumbledore of their whereabouts. In the room, she found Harry in a corner talking quietly with Draco, while Blaise and Ginny were trying to come up with a way of escape. Hermione joined the last pair.

"Have we thought of anything?" she asked.

Blaise shook his head. "Some of us should have stayed down stairs, out of sight. We've basically just trapped ourselves..." Hermione gasped.

"Blaise, that's brilliant!"

"What? What did I say?"

Hermione turned to Ginny. "The twins!"

Ginny's eyes brightened when she caught on to Hermione's line of thought and ran for the window to release a Patronus message to Fred and George. The message had just been sent when somebody knocked. Five wands were instantly pointed at the door.

"I told Tom to tell Dumbledore the wrong room numbers," Hermione whispered to Blaise.

Harry came up beside her and whispered, "answer the door, Mione. Pretend it's your room if Dumbledore is out there. We'll try to think of something if you can stall him."

Hermione nodded and walked to the door, sliding her wand up her sleeve, knowing full well that if Dumbledore tried to do something to her, there was no way she'd be able to do anything about it, even if she tried using her wand. It just felt better to feel her wand against her arm. Behind her, the others gathered in the corner to the right of the door.

"This is so fucked up. We're hiding from Dumbledore," Harry growled. "I don't want to hide from him."

"Shut it, Harry!" Ginny hissed just as Hermione opened the door.

I understand how you feel, Harry. But now is not the time for a confrontation with Dumbledore. We're not ready, and you're still not feeling well.

I'm not a baby, Draco; I'll be all right.

Hermione schooled her features in irritation, opened the door, and then nearly fell down with relief. It was only Matilda the maid outside the door.

"Miss, I was sent to tell you those people you mentioned to Tom are here now. Downstairs."

"Thank you, Matilda. You should go now before they see you."

Matilda nodded and departed. Hermione shut and locked the door and leaned back against it. "That was Matilda, the maid. She says Dumbledore is here."

"We need to leave now. We can't just stay in here. I'm not fond of being trapped in places," Draco said.

"We could always try to slip down the stairs without being seen," Blaise said.
"Yeah," Harry moved towards the door. "Let's go. There are five of us and two of them; we can at least cause enough distraction for some of you to escape."

"You and Draco will be the ones to escape. Dumbledore isn't after me, Blaise, or Hermione."

Harry opened the door and as a group they filed out of the room and headed for the stairs. Draco suddenly stopped when he saw the top of Dumbledore's pointed hat bobbing its way up.

"Fuck!" he reached over Blaise's shoulder and grabbed Harry, who probably wouldn't have stopped otherwise, and they all rushed back into the room. Ginny and Hermione blasted the door with the strongest wards and locking charms they could manage.

"Get off!" Harry ripped his shoulder away from Draco's grip and scowled at the door.

"Don't be stupid, Harry. The hallway was too narrow to have any kind of decent fight," Ginny said. "He would have picked us off one at a time with a stunner."

"They're in there, Albus," came the gruff voice of Moody. "Number eleven." Everyone held their breaths and waited.

They were surprised to only hear two gentle taps at the door, and for a moment it didn't seem as if anyone was going to do anything. Finally, Hermione rolled her eyes and stepped close to the door.

"Hello?"

"Miss Granger, how are you, my dear?" Dumbledore's gentle voice inquired. Ginny snorted.

"Oh, Headmaster! I'm fine. What are you doing here?" Hermione turned and looked at her friends; widening her eyes as if to say she had no idea what she was doing.

"What are you doing?" Draco mouthed the words. Hermione only shrugged.

"I wonder if I may come in, Miss Granger. There is something we must discuss."

"I... I'm afraid not, Professor. I'm not decent. It has been a trying day and I've decided to go to sleep early."

"Surely you weren't planning on going to sleep with Miss Weasley, Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy, and Mr. Zabini in the same room, were you?"

Hermione frowned. "We're having a sleep over. We're all very tired," she replied with a sharp nod.

"I see why it wasn't hard to get along with the Gryffs," Blaise whispered to Draco, who grinned despite the situation. He really hadn't thought Hermione had it in her.

"Where the hell are Fred and George?" Ginny hissed beside them. "They should have been here by now!"

And Severus? When we disappeared they would have gone looking for us, right?

He'll be here soon, Harry.

There was an impatient growl on other side of the door. "I can see you're all standing around, and you are so decent! I've got no patience for liars, witch!"

"Alastor..." Dumbledore murmured. "Open the door, Hermione. I must speak with Harry and
"I'm sorry, Professor. But I'm not going to do that."

"Harry," Dumbledore raised his voice. "I will blast this door open and I don't imagine you want to be responsible if one of your friends is hurt."

Hermione's eyes widened. That was a very cheap shot for Dumbledore to throw. Feeding off Harry's guilt and insecurities was something Voldemort would do. Was there really that much of a difference between Voldemort and Dumbledore?

Draco started growling and dug his fingers into Harry's shoulders. "Don't listen to him."

"He's only trying to bait you," said Ginny. Harry knew this was true, but he wanted to make himself clear to Dumbledore, and he wanted to do it now.

"I'm finished having simple words with you Dumbledore. I'm no longer doing what you say." Harry walked to the door and only continued to speak when his nose was nearly touching the wood. "You are not my guardian and you never were. You are only the headmaster of a school, the leader of an organization of gullible misfits. An organization where the misfits are used to suit others' purposes. Do you know who I am, Dumbledore? Do you know what your actions in the past have turned me into? How many times a week do people in the Wizarding World think of you and how many times a day do you think they talk about me?" his voice had lowered, emotionless and cold. Hermione felt herself get goose bumps, and for the first time ever, she feared her best friend. Looking at Draco, she noticed he had goose bumps also, but by the hot look he was giving Harry, it wasn't caused by fear.

"You don't want to make this mistake," Dumbledore said lowly.

"Dumbledore, I've spoken with the dead," Harry said lowly, and smirked when a full minute passed in knowing silence. "I made my choice when I realized who I wanted to be and when I discovered you were directly responsible for most of the bad that's happened in my life."

Harry returned back to Draco's side then as he didn't think it was safe to linger by the door any longer. He could feel Dumbledore's anger building up and mixing with his powerful magic, and Harry knew it wouldn't take much at all for the headmaster to knock down the door. Question was, how much damage was Dumbledore planning on causing? Harry motioned the others over until they were in a tight group and prepared to put a shield around them.

"You can do that? A working shield around all of us?"

I can try.

Draco shook his head. Typical.

Suddenly a loud explosion echoed throughout the Leaky Cauldron; wild screams immediately followed.

"Ah, that would be the twins." Harry murmured.

"How do you know?" Blaise asked and shared a confused look with Draco.

"The building didn't shake at all. It was only a din bomb," Ginny whispered to them.

"Death Eaters! Death Eaters are attacking!" Tom began yelling at the top of his lungs. "Headmaster! Dumbledore! Death Eaters!"
"Come, Alastor. We need to stop them."

"And Potter?"

"Where can he go? We'll visit again."

"Perfect!" Draco exclaimed when he went to check the door, and found no one outside of it.

"Do you think he really fell for it?" Ginny asked, poking her head out into the hallway.

"We don't have the time to care."

The group quietly made their way out of the room and down the stairs, pausing whenever someone yelled out. Being their sister, Ginny recognized some of the disguised voices as her brothers'. And then Snape came out of nowhere and she shrieked. Blaise didn't miss a beat and slapped a hand over her mouth.

"Professor! Thank Merlin." Hermione really looked relieved to see him. It was such a surprise to see, especially for Harry and Ginny. "You have to take Harry and Draco away. Dumbledore is here for them!"

"I am already aware. Follow me; we're going to Malfoy Manor."

"But Professor!"

"Now, Hermione!" Severus barked, and was relieved when she followed with no other objections. They were running out into the small entrance area when they heard Moody yell out behind them. Apparently they had been seen.

"You three go on," Blaise said as he stopped. Ginny and Hermione paused as well to stay with him. "I'll-"

"We," Ginny stressed and Blaise shot her a grin.

"We'll try to distract them some more and I'll take Luscious Red and Hermione to my place. From there we'll get to Malfoy Manor."

"Thanks, Blaise." Harry nodded and Draco patted his friend's arm.

"Later, mate." They ran out after Severus to the Apparition point and Harry was relieved to see both Remus and Sirius waiting impatiently.

"Thank Merlin!" Remus exclaimed.

"We're fine. Escaping Dumbledore's evil clutches turned out to be easy." Harry found it ironic he was now running from Dumbledore straight into Voldemort's clutches. Shouldn't he feel something other than mild relief?

"And he's pissed off good, too," Draco commented from beside him.

"I'm returning to headquarters now. Dumbledore mustn't see me with you or there will be no point in staying in the Order," Remus said before Apparating away.

"Come here, you! Worried me nearly to death, you have!" Sirius dragged a grinning Harry into a light chokehold, laughed at Draco's amusingly near violent reaction, and Apparated Harry and himself to Malfoy Manor.
When Harry felt his feet touch the grounds of Malfoy Manor, he tried to take a deep breath, and then promptly started to choke. Sirius' arm had instantly tightened around Harry's neck when he saw the Manor after landing. Harry started to beat his godfather's arm until Sirius realized what he was doing.


Harry nodded as he bent over coughing, trying to drag air past his semi-bruised throat. Severus and Draco appeared then and Draco was instantly in front of Harry, wrapping his hands around Harry's throat, healing the injured area with his fingers.

"Thanks," Harry murmured gently, and held onto the fingers that were about to pull away. "Sirius was remembering something painful. He forgot he had me like that."

Draco nodded and placed a kiss on Harry's neck. "Sure you're okay?" he kissed the other side, trailing his tongue down to the hollow his Harry's neck.

"Mmmhmm." Harry allowed his eyes to close in bliss and then made a pitiful keening noise when Draco was suddenly lurched away from him by Severus, who had grabbed Draco around the back of the neck and was now toting the blond towards the dark double doors of the manor.

"We've just arrived and already you want to fornicate in the grass! Have you no shame, Draco?" The blond sputtered and tried to get out of his grip, and failed miserably. "This must be the work of the bond, because I cannot imagine you're in your right mind right now."

"You can let go, Uncle Sev. I'm fine now." Severus snorted and shoved Draco through the open doorway.

Harry and Sirius followed slowly after. Harry looking at his godfather's increasingly pained expression. "Sirius, you know you can talk to me."

"I know, pup."

Harry sighed. Didn't look like Sirius was prepared to talk about it anytime soon. When they walked into the manor, Sirius put a hand on Harry's shoulder to stop him.

"Do Remus and I need to have a talk with you? You know, about the birds and the bees? Cause I really don't want to have to do that."

"Padfoot, no!" Harry started to wave his hands in front of him. "I don't need the talk. I think I'm fine." He glanced over at Draco who was arguing with Severus over something or another. Besides, the way he was feeling Harry didn't give a damn what anyone had to say. All he wanted was Draco.

Sirius only had to look in Harry's eyes and realized exactly what his godson was thinking. "I realize you've found who you want to spend your life with, but Harry…" Sirius dragged them a few more feet away and lowered his voice. "Have you ever…uh…what I mean is…"

Harry tried hard not to blush, but wasn't succeeding. "No, Sirius, I've never."

"Harry, it hurts the first time." Sirius wanted the ground to open up and swallow him whole. Harry could never be as embarrassed as Sirius was at the moment, and if he didn't love Harry so much he would have cursed James for making him the godfather. And because all this was painfully obvious on Sirius' face, Harry decided to take the conversation in stride and bring it to a close as quickly as possible.

"Yeah, that's what I've heard. I'm not worried. Draco will take care of me."
Sirius raised his eyebrows. "He's been with others?"

"Draco does have a reputation at Hogwarts. With girls...and boys." Harry's gaze sharpened and narrowed on Draco who suddenly looked at him and quirked a perfectly sculpted eyebrow. Sirius started to laugh.

"What the hell is so funny?" Harry demanded.

"Most of its not true."

"What?" he snapped.

"The rumor about Malfoy's sex life is a bunch of rubbish. It was like that with Lucius when we were in school. Mostly it's for the Malfoy reputation. It's another stupid Malfoy tradition. I guarantee it, Harry."

Harry was quiet for a moment and Sirius figured he was mentally speaking with Draco. It was confirmed when Draco stiffened and his face started to flush.

"See, told you."

Harry left the Entrance Hall looking very satisfied and Sirius received a death glare from Draco for his troubles.

Severus wanted to sequester the boys in two separate rooms until Lucius returned, but Harry and Draco would have none of that and told Severus they weren't going anywhere except to the Floo Room to wait for Hermione, Blaise, and Ginny.

Sirius started pacing once they reached the Floo Room, wondering what the hell he was doing at Malfoy Manor again, voluntarily. Many years had passed since he'd last been to the manor, and the memories he had of those past times were some of the best he ever had. Sirius closed his eyes tightly against the pain in his heart. Merlin, he'd been so in love with Lucius back then. Sirius cursed his thoughts and turned to look for something that could take his mind off the past, but that was near impossible as the past surrounded him in white and gray marble.

"How did you two manage to Apparate out of Snape Manor and straight into the Leaky Cauldron?" Severus asked from his position between Draco and Harry. He was determined to keep the two boys apart, at least until explanations have been made.

"I want to know how Harry managed it without splinching," Lucius said on his way in. Immediately he sought out Draco and was reassured when he saw his son was not harmed in any way. And then he saw Siri standing in a corner, glaring into the Floo fire. Lucius wasn't usually known as a coward, but he lost his nerve when Sirius looked over and their eyes locked. Sirius' pain was clear in his eyes. Lucius looked away first and went to stand next to his son. Draco had been watching the exchange with interest.

"I didn't mean to do it, Severus, but I couldn't listen anymore. I just wanted to be alone."

"And you took Draco?"

Harry blushed at Lucius' question. "I guess not exactly alone. But then halfway to the Leaky Cauldron I lost him and then ended up on the floor of my room. I'm not sure how I managed to Apparate us though."

The Floo started up and everyone backed away. "Who are we expecting?" Lucius drawled.
"Blaise, Ginny, and Hermione. They had to Floo to the Zabini's first."

Lucius said nothing to this, but he was wondering how he would explain the presence of a Mudblood and more blood traitors to the Dark Lord. The flames jumped to a bright green and Granger tumbled out first, short of breath. She had scratches all over her face and was clutching her side.

Harry and Draco helped her up. "Merlin, Hermione, what happened to you?"

Hermione shuddered and pulled her hand away. Someone cursed when they saw the blood on her hand. "I'm fine. Just a little run in with Mad Eye. He really doesn't like Fred and George." She tried to laugh, but her voice trailed off and her eyes rolled to the back of her head. She'd fainted dead away.

"Hermione!"

"Give her to me." Severus swooped over and had the unconscious witch in his arms in moments.

"Take her to your chambers," Lucius told Severus. "I'll have our best Healer called immediately."

"Do not waste time, Lucius. If you know what's good for you, you'll drop your ridiculous prejudices against her."

"Severus, do you want me to get the Healer or not?"

Severus nodded and briskly walked out just as Ginny came through the Floo. She came out coughing and staunching blood flow over her eye.

"Where's Hermione!" she shrieked. She was injured by Moody. Where is she?"

"Ginny, it's okay. We're getting a Healer for her. What about you?"

I'm fine. Mad Eye won't soon forget my Bat-Bogey Hex!"

"And Blaise?"

"He should be right behind me. He had to warn his mother that the Order might be dropping by. I think we've all just jumped onto Dumbledore's Most Undesirable List."

Blaise Flooed in, and he looked murderous. "Oh, Dumbledore's going to get his. He had no regard for the safety of innocent wizards and witches." Blaise's arm was bleeding, but he didn't seem to notice. "Hermione all right?"

"Yes, she's being looked after." Harry said. "Hey, thanks Zabini."

"You can thank me by giving me something to do in regards to Dumbledore."

"We'll keep that in mind."

Severus entered his chambers and headed to his bedroom. He lay Hermione down and partially lifted her shirt to get a good look at the wound. His eyes glinted maliciously when he saw how deep the cut was. What the hell was Moody thinking to attack Hermione? He didn't know it, but Mad Eye had just given Severus his life.

"In here." Severus turned to see Lucius leading a young woman into the room. She walked with a bright smile and a tight bun atop her head. Lucius had wasted no time at all in getting Hermione help.
And the best help at that.

"Lucius, thank you," Severus said once his friend and the Healer stopped by the bed. Lucius nodded and looked at the damage.

"That's deep. Moody did this?"

Severus gritted his teeth and nodded.

"Why, it's Miss Granger! I only saw her this morning with Mr. Potter and Mr. Malfoy." The Healer looked up. "I'm very surprised to find she's the one I'm to be working on here."

"And do you think you could start with that already, Bluemoon? She's already lost a lot of blood."

"Of course," Amortia Bluemoon then rolled up her sleeves, revealing the unmistakable form of the Dark Mark tattooed on her arm, and immediately set to work.

"You saw her this morning?"

"Yes, Severus. She and misters Potter and Malfoy came to have Mr. Potter's eyesight fixed. Odd though. Something was preventing me from completing the spell."

Severus watched intently as Amortia easily healed Hermione's wound. She was just preparing to clean and heal the scratches on Hermione's face, when the door flew open, letting in Harry, Draco, Blaise, and Ginny.

"Ah ah ah," Amortia said, waving a finger back and forth, stopping the progress of the group. "You are not to approach until I've completely healed Miss Granger. And yes, she will be fine."

"Healer Bluemoon?" asked Harry incredulously. She was a bit too far away for him to be able to see her clearly, but he recognized her voice easily enough.

"Yes, Mr. Potter. Nice to see you again."

"Er…Nice to see you again as well."

"Who is that?" Ginny asked, never one to be left out of things. Blaise bent over her shoulder so he could also hear.

"She was the Healer sent to heal my eyes this morning."

"Oh right. How did that go?"

"Didn't work."

"Oh." Ginny watched the Healer for a moment and soon caught sight of the Dark Mark. "But she's a Death Eater!"

"What?" Harry stepped forward intent on getting between the Healer and Hermione, but was restrained by Draco.

"Let her finish first," Draco said.

Harry pulled his arm away and scowled at him. "What, do you like her now that you know she's a Death Eater, Malfoy?"
Harry didn't mean it. He wasn't sure why he said it, and he definitely wished he could take it back when he felt the hurt his words caused his soul mate.

"That's not fair, Harry."

"Draco…I'm just worried about Hermione. I didn't mean…" But Draco's eyes had gone cold and dark and it wasn't just hurt coming from the Slytherin, but anger as well.

"That's fine, Potter. I should be glad to know how you really feel." Draco turned on his heel and walked away.

"You know that's not true!" Draco ignored him and was soon gone. Draco also refused to reply to any of Harry's mental calls. Harry looked back to find Ginny and Blaise watching him.

"Is there a reason why you're staring at me?" he snapped. They shook their heads slowly and backed away. His face was almost terrifying. It seemed when one soul mate was pissed, so was the other.
Nearly three days went by without Harry and Draco seeing each other and with everyone having to deal with their subsequent bad moods before Severus decided enough was enough. He knew, eventually, the boys would work it out themselves, but it being Draco and Harry, that could take centuries, as both were very stubborn and refused to be the first one to back down. Just like their old rivalry at Hogwarts.

Harry had taken to brooding in his room and was doing just that when Severus knocked and entered without waiting for an invitation. "'Lo, Severus." Harry barely picked his head up off the desk where he had been sitting for half the day. Severus gave his nephew a calculating look after perching himself on the window seat.

"You two are acting like children. You need to stop being stubborn and seek Draco out."

"Why doesn't he stop being stubborn? I've already apologized a hundred times. Draco doesn't want to hear. I refuse to say it again and I'll be damned if I'm the one to go looking for him!"

"Does it not hurt to be away from each other for so long?" Severus watched as Harry sat up, his hands fisted on the desk in front of him. He looked down and mumbled something so low Severus had to lean forward. "What was that? I missed it." Harry's gaze snapped to his and Severus held his breath. There were dark circles under Harry's eyes and his skin was sallow looking.

"I said yes, it hurts." But it was more than that. The bond seemed to be punishing Harry for staying away from his mate. The heavy pull in his chest always trying to pull him in Draco's direction. Inside he was cold and his skin clammy. And yesterday he'd felt like he had the Muggle influenza; at least now it wasn't as bad.

Harry went to lie on his bed and stared at the ceiling covered in black and Slytherin Green silk, betting all his money every room was probably decorated like this one. He'd stopped trying to get through to Draco using their bond yesterday when it became apparent Draco wasn't going to respond. At least Draco hadn't cut him off completely, and they could still feel each other. Draco was still angry but Harry couldn't discern through the bond exactly what was making him stay mad.

"I thought you were a Gryffindor, Harry. Why are you in here hiding?"

Harry glared at his uncle. "I'm not hiding. He knows where I am. And it wouldn't do me any good to go find him because he'll just ignore me and being ignored like that pisses me off."

Severus sighed. It seemed he wouldn't be able to get through to Draco using their bond yesterday when it became apparent Draco wasn't going to respond. At least Draco hadn't cut him off completely, and they could still feel each other. Draco was still angry but Harry couldn't discern through the bond exactly what was making him stay mad.

"I suppose I should be grateful for small miracles," Severus drawled. "You will dine with me tonight,
"no arguments Harry. I'll collect you in an hour, so be prepared to leave."

"I Don't Want To Go Anywhere." Harry punctuated each word through gritted teeth.

Severus snarled and grabbed Harry's t-shirt, pulling the young wizard halfway off the bed and bringing their faces close together. "You will get a hold of yourself, Harry. No nephew of mine is going to waste away because of a lover's spat! You will go have a shower and you will present yourself in dining robes when I return." Severus released his hold, and Harry flopped back down against the mattress.

Harry briefly considered telling Severus where he could shove all his stupid demands, but thought better of it. Maybe getting out would make him feel better, at least for a short time. And he was hungry, despite what he'd said. "I don't really have a choice, do I?"

"No, you don't. You have an hour, Harry." With that said, Harry's uncle swept out of the room in a spectacular wave of billowing robes.

"I'm going to find out how he does that."

"Draco, mate, what are you doing?" Blaise asked after stopping by for a visit and finding Draco at his desk, a book open in front of him, but the page had not been turned in an hour. Draco's elbows were on the desk, his hands splayed through his hair, holding his heavy head up while his eyes remained closed. Blaise came over and perched on the corner of the desk. "Draco?"

"What?" Draco replied slowly, opening his eyes. His gaze was glassy and unfocused as he gazed at the table.

"You can't seriously tell me you haven't spoken with Harry yet? How long do you plan to let this go on?"

"It's not any of your business."

"You're right. It probably isn't my business," Blaise agreed cheerfully and pushed off the desk. He watched Draco's slumped shoulders for a moment, and then shook his head. This was dim-witted. Harry did say he was sorry. And Blaise understood why Harry said what he did. The Gryffindor had been stressed and worried. They'd just had to flee from Dumbledore, of all people and Hermione had been lying in a bed with a gash in her side. And to top it off, a Death Eater was healing Harry's muggleborn friend. Blaise understood why Harry had snapped at him. Surely Draco understood this.

"I ran into Ginny on my way here." Blaise thought changing the topic might bring Draco out of his stupor for a while. "She tells me she's temporarily holed up here as well."

Draco snorted. "Yeah, it's crazy. Charlie Weasley came by yesterday, prepared to drag her home on his mother's orders but Severus and Sirius had a talk with him. Apparently he was already sympathetic to Ha..." Draco sighed and looked back down to the book. "He was already sympathetic to Harry, and after talking with Sev, it seems we've gained ourselves another ally, who will also remain in the Order like Lupin to keep tabs on Dumbledore. It's a good move, especially since Dumbledore has moved the Order headquarters."

Ooh, intrigue! Blaise perked up. "Another ally for what?"

Draco surprised him with a smirk. "Oh, you know. This and that."

"Is that all you're going to tell me? Come on, Draco!"
"Fine, I will say this. It's going to start when we return to Hogwarts. We're going to have fun, Blaise."

"I suppose I can wait for more information with a promise like that." Blaise studied Draco for a minute before speaking again. "I'm sure Black will be happy to have his home back. He won't have to spend so much time here. You can see he hates it."

"No." Draco stood and stretched. "It's actually the opposite. If you watch him, you can see it. Gryffindors are always showing their hearts on their sleeves. He hates it because he likes what the manor is making him remember from when he and Father were together."

"Has Black said when he plans to move?"

"Some time soon, that's all I know."

"When he moves back, do you think Harry will go with him?"

Okay, so Blaise had thought to keep the subject off of Harry, but from Draco's reaction to his question, he was sure this avenue of topic was exactly what was needed to get Draco to do something other than sulk. Draco's reaction was instantaneous and Blaise hastily backed up when Draco turned on him with blazing silver eyes; his teeth growing until they were poking against his bottom lip. After a second, Blaise saw drops of blood pooling around the teeth points until the droplets began to fall from his lip and down his chin. Blaise was completely justified in feeling the briefest moment of fear.

"No," Draco hissed. "He's mine!"

"Did you know you have blood dripping down your chin?" Blaise took a tentative step forward. "Are you two turning into vampires? Because this," Blaise pointed at Draco's eyeteeth, "is screaming vampire at me. You're not getting the urge to suck my blood, are you?"

Draco hissed and Blaise raised his hands in surrender and backed away. "No problem. I'll keep my thoughts to myself."

Blaise wasn't so afraid that he feared for his safety if he turned his back on Draco, so he turned around and walked to the terrace, throwing open the French doors and stepped out, knowing it wouldn't be long before Draco calmed down. He leaned against the railing and looked across the grounds. There usually wasn't much to see at the front of the manor, except the few hundred yards of lawn and then the forest surrounding the manor. But he knew behind the manor, the Malfoy's had a Quidditch pitch and broom shed, as well as a horse stable, and near the end of the property, a small lake. And at the opposite side of the manor, there was a large garden with an exquisite fountain, and strangely enough albino peacocks.

The sun was just setting, and the view didn't look as uninteresting with the different colored light streaking across the sky. And at the last moments of light, the sun shined brightly upon the forest, blasting hot color on the trees, making it seem as if the forest were on fire.

"I don't think its vampire," Draco said at last. Blaise looked to find Draco leaning against the doorframe, staring at the horizon. Every inch of him with taut with tension. "But what do I know about insane magical creature bonds? It could be anything."

"Hermione's been going to the library to research different magical creatures. She may have some answers. You should leave your room for a while and go speak with her. Tell her about all the changes that have happened to you so far."
Draco closed his eyes against a particular sharp tug originating in his chest, which meant Harry was on the move. As the pull became more irritating, Draco knew his soul mate was increasing the distance between them. "I'll go find her in a minute." Draco closed his eyes and tried to clear his mind. And it worked after a few minutes, when he felt the bond tug lessen.

Blaise peered over the railing when he heard the main door open. Moments later Professor Snape glided out onto the grass. He stopped after a few feet and turned to look back at the door. "Let's go. We don't have all night."

"Just coming." And then Harry came walking out.

"Harry is going somewhere," Blaise announced.

Draco opened his eyes and pushed off the door frame. He moved to stand beside Blaise and looked down. Draco stared without blinking, merely soaking in the sight of Harry. Nearly three days had gone by since they'd seen each other, and now all Draco felt was the want for his soul mate. Especially when said soul mate was immaculately dressed in dark green formal robes and his hair was being swept back away from his face by the wind. Harry and Severus were talking quietly and they made no move to Apparate.

"Merlin, please don't leave me here alone!" Sirius shouted as he ran out of the manor. "You weren't thinking of leaving without me, were you?"

Harry turned and smiled at his godfather. "Of course not, Padfoot. Did you forget we need you to get passed the wards?"

Draco's fingers gripped the railing in a death hold, and his eyes were nearly spitting fire. Blaise smirked and gathered up more fuel for the flame.

"I guess Black is moving home today then."

"Potter, where the fuck do you think you're going?"

Draco's voice carried all the way to the forest, and Blaise winced at the harsh tone. That was no way to speak to a lover when you need to make up with said lover. Hearing him, Harry's smile fell and he looked up at the terrace, but only for a moment. Then he deliberately turned his back on them.

"Let's go," he said flatly to his guardians.

"Potter? I'm talking to you!"

"Can't talk now, Malfy. I'm leaving." Severus and Sirius were exchanging looks, wondering if they should intervene at last, but Harry grabbed Sirius' arm. "We're going now!" he demanded to the older wizards.

Draco jumped onto the railing "The hell you are!" he jumped off the terrace just as Sirius, Harry, and Severus Apparated away.

"Draco! Fuck man!" Blaise strained his eyes against the darkness and located Draco just as the blond landed forty feet below, with perfect balance and no injury whatsoever. "Have you lost your bloody fucking mind? You can't just go jumping off buildings!" Blaise twisted around and searched the room for the Firebolt Draco always kept in his room for emergencies. Once located, Blaise mounted and flew out of the French doors and down to land in the lawn where Draco was sitting, arms wrapped around his legs, head pressed against his knees.
"Do you think he really left?" asked Draco in a small voice. Blaise understood the tone. Not many people could claim they had ever seen Draco Malfoy defenseless and vulnerable. Only Pansy and himself. But Blaise was still too lit up from Draco's jump to really give a damn if Draco wasn't himself and needed to be dealt with in a calm manner.

"He left!" Blaise shouted. "He's fucking gone, Draco!" he threw his arms out and turned in a circle, indicating all Malfoy land. "Harry is no longer here! Your fault, by the way!"

"I didn't think he would leave me."

Blaise sighed and looking up at the star lit sky, started to count to twenty. When he was done with that, he gripped Draco's shoulder after crouching down beside him. "Mate, you need to snap out of it. This isn't like you." Draco raised his head and Blaise gasped at the amount of longing encompassed within his silver eyes. "Seriously, Draco. Do you honestly think Harry would just leave without saying anything to you if he wasn't coming back? You need to reign in your hormones and think logically." It was obviously the right thing to say. Blaise knew Draco was back the moment his friend glared death at him.

"No need to speak to me as if I were a child." Draco rose and dusted his slacks off. They began to walk back to the front door.

"You were acting like a child." Blaise rolled his eyes when Draco hissed at him.

"Besides, what were you thinking, jumping over the balcony like that?"

"No big deal, Blaise. I'm perfectly fine."

"No big deal? That was forty feet!"

Draco and Blaise entered the manor and Draco turned to make his way towards the library. "It's only thirty feet from the terrace to the ground."

"Who cares! Thirty, forty feet? Doesn't make much difference if it's anything over twenty feet and you have no broom!"

Just then Ginny came tearing down the hallway as if fifty Death Eaters were after her. Considering where they were, both Draco and Blaise looked behind her to make sure that wasn't the case.

"Hey Gin, what's-" Ginny barreled into Blaise, and then took cover behind him.

"Be a Gryffindor! Save me!" Both Slytherins shivered by the cold brought on from such a thought.

"Who lit your heels on fire?" Draco asked. Ginny peeked around Blaise's arm to look at him

"Hermione wants to go to the library…Again! I can't take it anymore. Take me away, please?" she begged Blaise and Draco arched an eyebrow. Blaise threw an arm around Ginny and grinned.

"Later, mate. Can't say no to Luscious Red. We'll be at the Zabini House if you need us." He and Ginny began walking in the opposite direction. "Oh, and tell Hermione about the jump, Draco. That's important."

"Fine, whatever."

"Draco…"

"I'll do it, all right!" Draco continued to walk, and barely heard Ginny ask Blaise what jump he was
talking about. He was sure he'd be hearing from Ginny later on about that. "Luscious Red," he murmured. "Makes her sound like an apple."

Knowing Hermione, she would have gone straight to the library, not wanting to waste valuable research time tracking Ginny down, so that's where he continued to go and was pleased to see he was correct. He walked in just as she was rounding a table in which every inch was covered in books, and the stacks were at least two feet high. She smiled at him as soon as she saw him. It still amazed him that she would have such a smile for him after everything that had happened in the past, and then he thought of Harry and his smiles and his forgiveness, and was amazed again and instantly regretful that he was ignoring his mate.

"What's up, Draco? I haven't seen you in a couple of days."

And then Draco felt guilty for forgetting how hard it might be for Hermione to be living at Malfoy Manor. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to leave you alone in a house full of Death Eaters…"

Hermione instantly waved his words away. "You and Harry were having problems." Draco sighed and heavily sat in the chair next to Hermione. She frowned at him. "You're still fighting, then?" it was a question with an obvious answer and she didn't expect Draco to respond. Hermione smiled and rubbed his arm for a second before she grabbed a book and cracked it open. It literally made a cracking noise as if it hadn't been opened in a hundred years.

"How are you…Er…the cut?" Draco motioned to her healed wound.

"Healer Bluemoon patched me up and I'm good as new now. We talked a bit today when she came to check on me. She's a lovely witch, Draco and it's so strange that she's a Death Eater. I thought all Death Eaters hated Muggles and Muggleborns."

"Don't tell anyone." Draco leaned close and whispered, "it's a conspiracy. Not all Death Eaters are for the extermination of Muggles and muggleborns."

Hermione had no reply to that, and went back to reading her book. Draco thought about helping her since she was doing all the work just to help him and Harry, but he couldn't concentrate because of his worry.

"Do you know if Sirius is moving back to Grimmauld Place today?" he asked casually while grabbing a book amongst the piles. Hermione looked at him curiously. Anything casual Draco had to say was never really said in a casual way and she was alert at once.

"Today? I'm not sure. But on my way here I did see Sirius leaving with Harry and Severus. I overheard them say they were going to Grimmauld for something. Why?"

"No reason."

Hermione made a noncommittal noise and went back to reading. She began to think Draco had followed after her when he spoke again. "Did he say anything to you before he left?"

Hermione smiled as innocently as possible. "Who, Sirius?"

Draco gritted his teeth. "Harry."

"Nothing. We only saw each other in passing and Severus was in a hurry so all we could do was wave at one another."

Draco began scowling at the table and started to torture a page of an old book by coiling the ends of
the page in towards the center. He only made it with one corner before Hermione huffed and pulled the book away from him.

"I know what this is about. If Harry planned to change locations, you would be the first to know. And it doesn't matter if you two are fighting, he would still discuss it with you. Draco, he's not going to leave you just because you've had a row. Harry's not like that."

Hermione shut her own book and pulled a rolled up parchment out of the journeyman's bag sitting near her feet. Draco seemed to be listening, so she continued. "Honestly, you two are acting as if you've never fought before. I would think it strange if Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy never fought, being soul mates or not."

Draco smirked, suddenly feeling worlds better. He attributed his lightened mood to Hermione, who was very good at soothing people, and the other part to Harry, who seemed to have lightened up a bit himself. "Stranger than living in a house full of Death Eaters and the supposed evil incarnate himself?" he asked her.

Hermione's eyes went wide and she leaned forward to whisper, "Voldemort doesn't live here, does he?" she began to look around, paying close attention to the shadows, checking to make sure no Dark Lords were lurking about. Draco laughed at her until she started to glare at him and finger her wand.

"He stays here sometimes but I'm never informed of when. Actually, I don't care to know." Draco took a closer look at the long parchment Hermione just unrolled and frowned. "What's this?"

"This is a list of all the creatures I've learned of so far with the characteristics and traits you and Harry have been displaying." She handed it to him and studied it for a minute.

He didn't know if amazing was the word for it, but she'd been thorough in her research so far. The list was in alphabetical order and ranged from A to Z and beside each name was a little symbol representing whatever trait that creature possessed which resembled what he and Harry were displaying. "This really is… amazing, Hermione."

Hermione blushed and took the parchment back. "Yes, well…."

"I have something else for your list."

"Really? What?"

Draco hesitated. Hermione was prone to overreact, and he didn't know if he wanted to deal with a lecture right now. But at least a lecture from Hermione might keep his thoughts occupied. "I jumped from my balcony and landed on the lawn with no problem."

"You jumped…." Hermione frowned. "How far?"

Draco resisted the urge to gulp in fear. "Thirty feet down. But it wasn't that bad, honestly. It felt like I only jumped five feet."

"Interesting…" Hermione pulled more parchment from her bag and pushed the other parchment over to him. "Go through that. I've got to start another list and then go through the books again to look for any creature that has the ability to jump like that." Then she frowned at him. "I suggest you don't try a jump like that again until after the transformation."

Draco was going to ask why she had to make another list, when he decided he really didn't want to know. He and Hermione sat in silence, each occupied with their parchments. Draco studied the lists
and the further along he read in detail, the more he wished he could tear it up and throw it in the fire. He refused to even read the descriptions of some of the names on it. The name was more than enough information.

When he was finally finished, he set the parchment down and folded his hands over it. "Done?"

"Yes." Draco took a breath. "Listen, Hermione. I need you to do me a favor."

"Okay."

"Whatever you do, do not show the lists to Harry."

At first Hermione wasn't keen on the idea of keeping the information away from Harry, but as she thought about it, she understood why Draco was asking. "You think he'll have a bad reaction?"

"I'm having a bad reaction. I think it's safe to say Harry will not take it well."

"All right. The lists will stay hidden from Harry but I will not keep him from looking for information on his own."

Draco smiled and hugged her.

Harry had never felt being a vindictive bastard was the way to go, but he had to admit after days of Draco ignoring him, it felt good to give as good as he got and Draco's snarling outrage as he'd Apparated to Grimmauld had given him a small thrill. It was always a thrill when Draco lost control.

"Come on, pup. Let's get in and out," Sirius said after dismantling the wards for Harry and Severus. "The Place isn't completely safe yet. Some Order members might return to check they haven't forgotten anything." Harry nodded and followed Sirius into Number Twelve.

"I'll just wait in the hall. Be quick about it," Severus called when he Apparated in behind them.

"Just a minute, Uncle Sev," Harry called back and led the way into the library.

"Did he say you could call him that?"

Harry grinned. "No."

Sirius snorted and watched Harry walk over and kneel down beside the fireplace. He started touching stones, jiggling and tapping them until he found the one he was looking for.

"What are you doing, Harry?" Sirius came to stand beside Harry and looked down to see him pull up a large stone at the base of the fireplace. Then he looked at Sirius with an apologetic smile.

"Sorry. Should have told you about this a long time ago. I meant to ask you if I could use the space beneath it, but something happened, and I had to put the journal away in a hurry. And I didn't remember it until Draco and I started that misunderstanding."

"Misunderstanding?" Sirius asked amused, staring at the black journal Harry had just pulled from beneath the mobile stone. "That's a very mature way of describing it. Funny, it wasn't very mature the way you ignored Draco, though. You could have solved this misunderstanding if you had just turned around and talked to him proper like."

"I didn't want to talk to him!" Harry declared and stood up. "If he can act like an arsehole, so can I."
Oh, yes. Very mature.

You're one to talk, what with you and Severus griping at each other all the time."

It only took five minutes to do what they had come for, and Harry thanked Sirius for coming with him. "Don't worry about the stone, Harry. I would have given you my permission. And besides, now I have another secret hiding place for something!" Sirius ruffled Harry's hair, much to Severus' chagrin and then Apparated back to Malfoy Manor.

"Must he cause chaos wherever he goes?" Severus' spat, and began to try and fix Harry's hair back to almost presentable. Harry looked up at him with wide eyes. Severus Snape was actually trying to fix his hair! Severus Snape was trying to fix his hair, and he wasn't even scowling or throwing snarky insults his way.

Severus caught sight of Harry's look and dropped his hands. Embarrassment was definitely an uncomfortable sensation. But then Harry smiled easily at him and Severus was able to relax. Harry watched curiously as Severus pulled out a Muggle candy wrapper.

"You would think the Ministry could find better objects to turn into Portkeys, wouldn't you?" the elder wizard drawled.

"Not really. The Ministry is run by fools. No logical changes are going to occur under the current administration."

Severus nodded, happy to know his godson could see the potential in their world, and the lack of people in charge that could bring about a grand change. "Indeed. Are you ready?"

"Yep."

Harry placed a finger on the wrapper. Five seconds later, at exactly eight o'clock, the Portkey activated and Harry felt that awful pull in his gut alerting him they were traveling. The cold darkness lasted longer than he'd ever felt using a Portkey and when they landed, Harry dropped to his hands and knees and began wheezing. His chest felt like Vernon Dursley was sitting on it; his stomach was all a mess and the pull of the bond was more irritating than normal.

He felt Severus' hands, lifting him up under the arms. "Are you all right?"

"Yes…" Harry coughed several more times until he felt his chest clear. "I don't particularly like Portkey transportation," he said as he looked around where they had landed; seeing that they were in a dimly lit room with only chairs lining the walls.

"The bond isn't too painful now, is it? We can go back."

"I'm okay. It's more of an irritating pain. I'll get used to it in a few minutes. I guess the pain isn't so bad because Draco and I aren't resisting the bond. We've already accepted it and each other."

"Then why in Merlin's beard are you still fighting?"

"Because he was being spiteful and I don't feel like accommodating him just because he's over it now. Though I doubt he is. The next words out of his mouth would probably have been a demand for me to stay at the Manor. So I left before he could say it. I'm not going to bow down to his whims."

Severus pinched the bridge of his nose. "Do you know the amount of headaches the two of you have given me these past two days-"
"Three days. It's been three days since fifteen minutes ago."

"Fine, wonderful…three days. Even Lucius has lost his patience with Draco and refuses to go near his son until you've worked out your problem. I will stay out of this, but you shouldn't let this go on."

Harry knew Severus was absolutely right, but when did you ever hear of a sixteen year old who took good advice from their elders, especially when it related to relationships. "So where are we? I didn't think you would bring me to a room filled with chairs."

Severus scowled and lightly cuffed the back of Harry's head. "Insolent brat." They left the room and Harry saw they had been in the Apparition and Portkey room of a restaurant. Instead of heading for the host stand, Severus took Harry's arm and led him outside. Harry's eyes widened and glittered as he took in the sight of Paris, France.

"Wow." Harry sincerely wished he had his glasses so that he could see the view without the blurriness.

"You've never been out of England. I thought some more culture would do you good. Come, we have reservations." They returned inside and Severus led Harry to the host stand to be shown to their table.

"Monsieur Snape. So good to see you again. And you've brought someone else with you!" The maitre d' seemed generally pleased that Severus had brought a guest.

"Do you always come alone?" Harry realized the maitre d' had been speaking in French, and he had understood. He figured it must be some spell that allows foreigners to understand what is being said.

"Lucius in prone to dine here occasionally." Severus turned a blank face to the maitre d'. "This is Harry Potter, my nephew."

Harry rolled his eyes. Honestly, was it necessary for an announcement? They were in a wizard's restaurant after all, and it only took two seconds for the French man's face to light up. Severus was smirking and Harry wondered if he'd told on purpose. Snarky bastard! "Monsieur Potter, what an honor! And you're Monsieur Snape's nephew?"

"It's not widely known yet," Harry replied, and continued to look behind the wizard to gape at the beautiful brightly lit restaurant. It had two floors; the bottom being used for the restaurant, while the top looked more like a fancy bar. It really wasn't the type of place Harry thought Severus would go.

"You're table is ready and you will not be disturbed."

"Thank you." Severus passed the wizard several Galleons after he and Harry had been shown to a table in the back, far from any other patrons.

"Wow, Severus. You seem positively cheerful!" Harry grinned cheekily at the Potions Master.

"I'm glad to see you're feeling better."

Harry shrugged and picked up his menu. He sighed and dropped it back to the table. "I can't read this."

"You're in the Wizarding World, Harry. Use your head." Severus leaned over and tapped the menu with his wand before going back to studying his own menu. Harry picked it up and saw the menu had translated itself into English. Looking over, he saw Severus had not translated his and when it was time to order, the wizard fired his off his choice in rapid French. Harry raised his eyebrows, and
watched his uncle amusingly. It seemed Severus was full of surprises. He would have to remember
to mention to Hermione about Severus speaking French. When it was his turn, Harry chose the
simple roasted chicken and scalloped potatoes.

"I bring you to France and you order the chicken?"

"What? Chicken's good. Chicken's safe."

Severus shook his head. A moment later, their food appeared in front of them and they began to eat.
"You'll begin lessons with Lucius tomorrow morning. He'll be expecting you in his study at eight in
the morning."

Harry nodded while chewing, but cursed Lucius for making the lesson so early in the morning.
Severus watched his nephew carefully; making sure Harry ate enough food. He was fully prepared
to order more food if he thought Harry could eat it. The younger wizard was still under weight. But
Harry seemed to have regained his appetite and Severus wondered if it was because he and Draco
were realizing how stupid they were being.

"Severus?"

"Yes?"

Harry looked up from his meal, studying his uncle. "Are you loyal to Voldemort?" he asked quietly.

"As long as you are no longer his target, I will always be loyal to my Lord."

Harry gave a half smile, nodding. Severus watched as Harry finished his dinner, apparently very well
satisfied with that answer. Which made Severus wonder what his nephew was scheming now.
"Have you thought about what you are going to do when Hogwarts reopens in September?"

Harry pushed his empty plate away and took a sip of the dark red wine and grimaced. Nasty stuff.
Tasted like vinegar. "I'll return for my seventh year, of course. Dumbledore can't really do much to
me there. And if he tries, he'll be alone. I doubt any of the other professors would help him, unless he
gets a DADA professor who's under his thumb."

"Which is very likely."

"If that's the case, we'll be ready. I'm being serious; Dumbledore is going to learn that he can't mess
with me anymore. We're taking his power away, Severus. It's already started and it'll get worse for
him as the days pass."

"Yes and I'm sure if he attempted to harm you, Draco would try to kill him."

Harry blushed, suddenly missing Draco more than ever. "True." He looked around again, noticing
that some of the patrons were looking over at them. "I did think about demanding a re-sort.
Hermione said it was possible under special circumstances."

"Which House would you want to be resorted in?"

Harry gave him a wry look. "Slytherin, of course. That's where the hat would send me. It's not just a
suspicion. Did you know it wanted to put my father in Slytherin?"

Severus choked on his wine, and just barely kept himself from spewing the contents in his mouth all
over the table. "Don't ever repeat that again." Harry grinned and stood up to leave with his uncle.
"We have some time before the Portkey activates to take us home. Do you want to walk around for a
"Sure." They left the restaurant and entered the heart of Paris' Wizarding World. It was not unlike Diagon Alley, except maybe a bit more cosmopolitan. There were definitely more restaurants and entertainment areas then Diagon Alley, and with a gulp, he noticed all the designer robe shops. Dozens of them. "Um…Draco doesn't make his way here to shop, does he?" Harry felt dread when Severus smirked.

"Oh yes. Often. He and Lucius come here to shop every year just before Draco goes off to Hogwarts. Lucky for you, they are still due for the trip this year and you'll most certainly be dragged along."

Harry groaned. "If I'm going so are you."

"I will not. Lucius and Draco are animals when it comes to spending money on themselves. Disgusting really. I'll not be dragged into that. Family or not."

They were silent for a time, taking in the sites, and Harry promised when his eyes were fixed or when he decided to go get contacts (because there was no way he was going back to glasses) he would return and tour the city with Draco. Surely Draco must know all the good places to see. And if he were forced by the Malfoys to come to France for a shopping trip, he would make sure they would do more than shop.

"Er… Severus? I just wanted to say thank you for bringing me."

"Surprisingly, it was my pleasure." They sat down at an outside café. Severus ordered more wine, while Harry chose butterbeer. "Is that your decision, then? To get resorted into Slytherin?"

"No. I realized it would be better for everyone if I stayed in Gryffindor…"

"I assure you, Harry, Slytherin would welcome you."

"Maybe that's true, but I'll cause more problems for Dumbledore if I remain in Gryffindor. And the other Houses will be easier to infiltrate if I'm not a Slytherin." Harry grinned at Severus' blank look. "I plan to bring about what Dumbledore has been preaching for years but has never really done anything to make sure it happens. I'm going to unite the Houses."

"And they'll be behind you, not Dumbledore…"

Harry nodded. "Probably not all the students, but Draco and Hermione will help with my friend making skills."

"You're looking for political allies?"

"Eventually."

Severus studied his nephew. "Will this road you plan to go down make you happy?"

"Should happiness be the deciding factor in anything?" Harry asked, staring steadily back at him, his emeralds eyes bright and curious.

Severus was unsure how to answer. It was true; he had never based any of his decisions upon his happiness. Perhaps he would have had he known about Lily and Harry before now. And he knew he wanted his nephew happy, if anything. They'd grown closer than ever imagined over the last few days and it was a shock for Severus to realize how much he cared for Harry.
"I think it should be one of the factors, yes."

"Strange. Hearing that from you." But it made Harry unexplainably happy.

"Yes, I realize it's an unnatural phenomenon."

When they returned to Malfoy Manor, Severus left Harry in the Entrance Hall and went off elsewhere in the manor. Harry supposed he was off to see Lucius or Voldemort, though he wasn't sure either was there at the moment. Harry went to his room and changed into green silk pajama bottoms he was sure Draco had lent him and a black tank top.

Before they'd arrived, Draco had mentioned a garden at the side of the house, and since he didn't feel like lying in bed and waiting for sleep that would probably never come, he decided to check the garden out. There was a rumor that the Malfoys actually kept peacock ghosts. Harry wasn't sure if that rumor was real or not, as the idea seemed kind of stupid to him. What good are peacocks that are ghosts? It just seemed pointless and not something the Malfoys would have.

Harry had to laugh at his train of thought and would have continued laughing if he hadn't heard a noise. Expecting the worst, he spun around with his wand in hand and nearly dropped it in shock. There outlined by the moonlight was a peacock ghost.

"Bloody hell! They really are ghosts…. what the fuck?"

"They are not ghosts."

Harry stiffened and just barely held himself still. "You really shouldn't sneak up on me like that around here, Lucius. You're liable to lose an arm."

"You sound convinced." Lucius stepped around Harry so that they were face to face. Harry sighed and tucked his wand away. "I don't need to sound convinced. You really might have lost an arm."

"You may relax around me. I'm not about to hurt you, because then I would be hurting my son, and others, and Draco can be such a pain at times…. It would really be an inconvenience."

Harry raised an eyebrow. "Riiight…"

"I do have some honor after all and you did come here seeking sanctuary. I've given you sanctuary and I'm not about to throw my family's name further into dishonor by hurting you in my own home after letting you in."

There were things about Lucius that reminded Harry of Draco, and he supposed that's why he relaxed. "I suppose it's just hard to get used to. You tried to kill me a couple of times." Harry half grinned, but Lucius frowned.

"More than a couple of times. You have a lot of dumb luck, Harry. Granted, it has worked for you so far but that doesn't mean it's going to last. That's why you need to think before getting yourself into situations-" he stopped when Harry raised a hand. Both blond eyebrows shot up past his hairline. What in the bloody hell made him just stop at Harry's command as if he'd been under the Imperious curse?

Harry had not meant to, but he'd felt the push of his power when he raised his hand. Suddenly Harry was feeling better than he had all day. "I appreciate what you're trying to say but isn't that what the lessons starting tomorrow are for?"

Lucius decided to ignore what just happened. "Yes, that's true. And I didn't come out here for that
anyway-

Again Harry raised a hand, and smirked when he saw how irked Lucius was becoming by having to automatically do as Harry wanted. Harry was having way too much fun with this new power and he'd only used it a couple of times. He briefly wondered if he could do it to Voldemort. "If this is about the quarrel Draco and I are having, you needn't worry. I've already decided to end it tomorrow. I don't like being away from him. If he tries to ignore me again, I'll make him listen."

"That's good then. I was getting tired of the moping."

Harry had an urge to stick his tongue out at Lucius, but decided against that and chose to sit on a bench and watch the peacocks that were not ghosts? Whatever. Why was he even thinking about it again? Lucius quickly bade goodnight and began walking back the way he came. Before turning out of sight, he looked back.

"They are not ghosts, Harry. They're albino peacocks." And then he was gone.

"Albino? Aren't peacocks popular because of their colors?" It still didn't make sense, but he shrugged. Draco and his father did a lot of things he didn't understand yet. And he knew he'd probably be better off not knowing a lot of the things.

Harry stayed in the garden for another thirty minutes until he thought he'd better go to bed. He took the long way around the manor, and wasn't ashamed that his wand was gripped tightly in his hand. Up the stairs and a few turns later, Harry slowed his steps when he heard the low murmur of voices. He thought about going to investigate, but then he recognized the voices belonged to Severus, Sirius, Remus, and surprisingly Lucius.

Harry didn't feel like talking to anyone and knew if any of them saw him, they'd drag him into a discussion. He just wanted to walk until he was too tired to think, and then crash out on his bed. He was just turning to leave when he heard his name.

"When do you plan to tell Harry the rest, Snape? You haven't even told us all you know."

Harry crept up and flattened against the wall beside the open doorway. His heart was suddenly pounding.

"I was waiting until after the transformations."

"How did you find out about Dumbledore's plans involving Tom Riddle?" asked Remus.

Severus remained silent and it was Lucius who next spoke. "Is that why you've come back to the Dark Lord?" came Lucius' drawl.

"I thought you left because Voldemort killed Lily," Sirius piped in.

There was more silence and it seemed Severus wasn't going to answer any of the questions. Harry heard the clinking of a glass, followed by the gurgling noise of liquid being poured into it. There was another moment of silence. Harry rolled his eyes. Couldn't Severus answer already?

"No." More silence. Dammit, Severus! Why can't you people talk!

"What do you mean, no?" Sirius finally barked.

"I mean, you unsophisticated mutt, that the Dark Lord did not kill Lily Potter."
"That's impossible, Severus," Remus said quietly.

"There's no fucking way you can be right about this!" Sirius shouted. Harry barely registered the sound of Sirius' chair hitting the floor, as the buzzing in his head seemed to get louder. He couldn't believe what he just heard; yet he knew Severus was telling the truth. Severus wouldn't lie about that, even to Sirius and Remus.

"I'm more curious to know who did kill Mrs. Potter." Lucius' voice was easily the calmest in the room.

"James Potter." Harry felt the color drain from his face and he noiselessly slid down the wall to sit in shock.

Inside the room, Sirius and Remus were in a similar state of shock and stared at Snape blankly.

"The Imperius?" Lucius finally questioned.

"Yes." Severus rubbed a hand against his forehead. He hadn't meant to get into this tonight.

"Did Dumbledore do this?" this came from the shaking voice of Remus.

"You can't seriously believe this, Remus! How the hell are we supposed to believe you, Snape?"

"Let's just say I've acquired some Pensieve memories that were thought to have been destroyed."

"Pensieve memories… Dumbledore's?" Sirius was still now, speaking quietly. Remus' head was in his hands. Lucius was watching Sirius.

"Yes. They are Dumbledore's memories," Severus confirmed.

Back in the hallway, Harry was struggling to breathe, trying to pull enough strength together to get himself off the floor and away.

Harry!

Even Draco couldn't penetrate Harry's shock. He managed to stand finally, but stumbled his first steps, slow to catch his balance. Somehow he finally managed to walk completely up right and he wandered around in a slow walk, unknowing where he was going and not really caring.

How was he supposed to believe his father killed his mother? Even if there was indisputable proof like a Pensieve memory. After all these years, now he was just supposed to accept that his father, who had loved Lily very much, shot the killing curse at his wife. If that were true, then why? Why was Voldemort there? And could Albus Dumbledore, headmaster of Hogwarts really have used an Unforgivable to make another person kill their spouse?

Harry...Harry, where are you? Draco's voice was frantic, but Harry didn't hear him. His legs suddenly stopped moving, his muscles went lax, and he tumbled to the floor again. Harry could only manage to pull himself to a sitting position and pull his knees to his chest, wrapping his arms around his legs.

My father killed my mother. Harry started to say it in his mind and repeated it over and over again. My father killed my mother. Until then, his tears had been kept at bay, but they silently fell now and Harry let them fall unchecked.

A crack in the air broke the silence and Draco appeared halfway down the hall, landing on his
stomach. He looked around and spotted Harry sitting in the middle of the hallway, looking like a ghost and apparently unaware of anything but his tortured thoughts. Draco tore down the hallway and skidded to a halt on his knees in front of Harry and pulled the smaller boy into his arms. A shuddering sob came from Harry before he said, "my father killed my mother, Draco. He made him kill her. He made him…"

"Harry, look at me…look at me!" Harry didn't look at Draco, but he did crawl into Draco's lap, wrapped his legs and arms around him and buried his face against his favorite part of his Slytherin's neck.

Draco held Harry tightly against him, and concentrated on his room and hoped to Merlin he could Apparate without any problems again. It worked, sort of. They landed in his room, but in a tangle of limbs on the floor. Draco disentangled himself and picked Harry up to take him to bed. All he could hope to do was calm Harry down enough so that the brunet could sleep. Draco was sure whatever happened tonight was big and they would need their strength to get through it. He pulled the feather down comforter over them both, and tucked Harry against him. When Harry turned into him, Draco began to nuzzle his neck, speaking softly to him, soothing Harry through the bond as much as he could and was pleased when Harry fell asleep after only fifteen minutes. Draco kissed his forehead over the scar and watched Harry's face. He looked at peace, in Draco's bed. He looked in place too. Finally.

Draco frowned when he thought about what Harry must have gone through tonight to put him into such an emotional lockdown. The only thing Draco knew was that Harry had suddenly gone cold in Draco's mind, and the words, my father killed my mother had been going through the Gryffindor's head nonstop. Draco lay back against the pillow and pulled Harry tighter against him, trying to clear his own thoughts for sleep; knowing things were going to happen the next day.
Hermione couldn't sleep, and since there was only an hour before dawn, she thought she ought to return to the library. After Draco left her last night, Hermione realized she was being stupid in regards to how she was doing the list. The book Severus had given Harry and Draco said the Magical Creature soul mate bond only manifested when nature wanted to preserve a species of a magical creature before it went extinct. Hermione went back over the list and cut it down to one third of the size.

Not many creatures were going extinct and none that bore resembling traits the boys were displaying. Hermione had thought vampire at first, but vampires were hardly going extinct and they didn't have the cat eye thing going for them like Harry and Draco. She did consider instead of the bond seeking to keep a creature from going extinct, it was probably the matter that Harry and Draco were maybe about to create a new half-breed species and vampire could be a part of it; which would please the soul mates because they'd probably still look human. Severus had been the one to explain the new species angle and she was nearly sure that was what was happening.

So engrossed in her thoughts and notes, Hermione failed to notice the disillusioned wizard glide into the library, and upon locating her, proceeded to find a chair with a good vantage point and sat, watching. He knew she would never notice his presence, as his Disillusionment Charm was a particularly powerful one. And he watched Hermione Granger for hours. The wizard watched as a house elf popped in with coffee for the witch when the sun finally rose and was slightly amused when she started to preach to the creature about house elf rights and equality for all magical creatures. In the end, the elf popped out with a horrified squeak, leaving the witch there looking frustrated but no less determined.

As time went on the wizard watched in irritating silence as Severus Snape walked in and proceeded to strike up a conversation with the witch and as she explained to Severus what her thoughts were on the Magical Creature bond, the hidden wizard realized there was something swimming under the surface with the two people talking quietly at the table.

"Have you seen Harry or Draco this morning?" Severus asked while he looked over Hermione's impeccable notes.

"No, I've only seen a house elf." Severus snorted and Hermione glared at him. "What?"

"I imagine you tried to convince it to rebel and seek wages, paid vacations, and to stand up for its rights."

"I merely reminded him that he does great service for wizards and should be properly thanked for it," Hermione replied with a sniff. "You have house elves, don't you Severus? Surely you must see the harm we do in ignoring these creatures…"

Severus closed his eyes before rolling them. He was not about to get sucked into a S.P.E.W discussion. "As much as I'd love to say that I would like to stay and chat about house elves, I can't, because I don't."
Hermione actually scowled, surprising Severus. "Fine, I'll stop talking about the elves, for now. Anyway, I wanted to talk to you about Harry's birthday."

"Is there something you forgot to mention?"

"No, it's not about the bond. I want to throw him a birthday party. I want it to be a surprise. I don't think he's ever had a proper birthday party."

"I think that can be arranged. Did you have a day in mind?" He was rewarded for his thoughtfulness by a blinding smile that twisted his gut and stimulated other organs as well.

"Wouldn't after the transformation be best? Once they've gotten used to it."

Severus thought about it, and then shook his head. "No, we'll have the party that night. It might do him and Draco good. You can invite his friends to Snape Manor and then do what you wish from there. Will this satisfy you, Hermione?" he purred to her, enjoying the bright blush taking over her face. Hermione smiled shyly and nodded. It was silent for a moment, before either of them realized how the dynamics of their relationship had changed.

Severus stood, and without another word, fled the library. Leaving Hermione to softly giggle behind her hand. The invisible wizard shook his head. Severus Snape was being brought down by a girl. It was almost disgusting.

Another hour passed, and finally the witch was dragged out of the library by her red headed Weasley friend. "Honestly Hermione. I know you're trying to help Harry and Draco, but staying up at all hours in the library isn't going to do anyone any good if you end up collapsing because you haven't slept or eaten. You're getting to be as bad as Harry and Draco."

"You're blowing it way out of proportion," Hermione murmured as she stuffed her parchments back in her bag. She knew Ginny wouldn't leave her alone until she'd given a rest with the library.

"I'm not. It doesn't matter anyway. We're going to go out and get some exercise," Ginny said as she began to help Hermione stack up all the books so that they would be ready for when Hermione returned. "We'll walk around Diagon Alley, buy things with the money I stole from Draco-"

"Ginny!"

"Visit Fred and George, get some laughs…. and maybe cause some trouble for Dumbledore. It'll be fun. Come on!"

The two witches began to walk out. "Severus has given us permission to throw Harry a surprise party at his manor tomorrow," Hermione said cheerfully. The wizard watched Miss. Weasley turn to stare at her friend, and they passed through the door way and out of sight. He heard Miss Weasley say something, though it was too low for him to discern the words. A second later, Miss. Granger cried out, "Ginny!" Miss Weasley's cackle followed her down the hall.

And the wizard sat on in contemplation over his bizarre new thoughts.

The lump under the black comforter groaned and rolled over, then gave a mighty yawn before stretching. Then it went quiet and still once more. Draco rolled his eyes. "Harry?" he said it again, standing at the foot of the bed with a towel around his waist, his hair still dripping wet from the shower. He and Harry had slept in until noon, which really didn't surprise Draco as they hadn't any real sleep since before the fight. And he imagined last night probably left Harry exhausted. But he didn't want to let Harry sleep the entire day away. They needed to discuss what happened, help
Harry got passed it and move on to planning revenge, because Draco was pretty sure Harry would be
seeking revenge, and if not Draco would be seeking it for him.

"Harry, you need to wake up."

The lump only mumbled incoherently and turned over again. Draco sighed and returned to the
bathroom. Under the covers, Harry's eyes fluttered open and at first he wondered where he was and
why he was surrounded in black darkness. It wasn't until he started to smell Draco all around him did
he remember last night and that he was in Draco's bed at last. Harry was a little more clearheaded this
morning, but was in no way over the fact that Severus claimed James Potter killed Lily Potter and
Dumbledore had put James Potter under the Imperius Curse to do it.

Harry buried his face against Draco's pillow and breathed in deeply, comforted by his soul mate's
scent, letting his body relax inch by inch, only to stiffen again when he felt the covers lift and Draco
slid under and pulled Harry's back against his chest. "I know you're awake, Harry."

Draco pulled back, running his fingers down Harry's chest as he did so, going lower and letting the
tips of his fingers graze Harry's crotch, eliciting a gasp from the brunet. Draco planned to get out of
bed and return to getting ready for the quickly passing day when Harry suddenly turned over and
threw an arm around Draco's waist.

"Stay with me?" Harry blushed and ducked his head against Draco's bare chest, which in turn made
him blush more. He hadn't been aware Draco was only dressed in boxers. Against his crotch, Harry
could feel Draco's rising interest, but instead of acting on it, Draco tenderly ran his fingers through
Harry's hair.

"Are you all right? You want to talk about what happened last night?" Draco winced when Harry's
fingernails dug into his flesh.

"Yeah, but first…where's my wand?"

"Under your pillow." Draco watched curiously as Harry grabbed his wand and tapped his mouth
with it, instantly cleaning his teeth and taking care of morning breath.

"I missed you even though you are a fucking arrogant prick…" Harry said this while reaching out to
softly caress Draco's face.

Draco sniffed and raised his nose in the air. "I didn't miss you at all, you self righteous bastard."

Harry smirked and cupped the back of Draco's neck, bringing the blond down for a slow toe curling
kiss; tracing the blond's delicious lips with his tongue, delighting in the tremors passing through
Draco's body. When Draco rolled Harry onto his back and stretched his well-toned body over him
brunet thrust his hips up. Draco entwined his tongue hungrily with Harry's once more before pulling
back and shaking his head.

"Stop trying to distract me, Harry. It's not going to work."

Harry sighed and wrapped his arms around Draco's back, bringing the blond back down so that his
head lay next to Harry's on the pillow, and silver eyes peered into his lover's patiently.

"I…. last night I overheard Severus talking with your father, Sirius and Remus. I didn't mean to
listen, but then Sirius said my name, and they immediately started to talk about how Dumbledore had planned all along to make Tom Riddle turn into Voldemort..." Draco wanted to ask questions but knew Harry would tell him everything he knew. "I couldn't move, so I was standing there, and they started talking about Severus' loyalties, one thing led to another, and he said he went back to the Dark Lord because Voldemort didn't kill my mum after all. It was my father who did that. Dumbledore supposedly put my father under the Imperius Curse and made him kill mum."

"How did Severus learn all this information, and why does he think it's not all a lie?"

"Because," Harry said gravely, his green eyes going dark. "After it happened, those memories were supposed to have been destroyed, but somehow Severus found them. And we all know Pensieve memories can't really be tampered with without anyone noticing, and Severus would know if he were looking at a false memory." Harry sat up quickly; his brow was furrowed as he thought. "I want to see those memories. I need to see it before I do anything else."

"Then we'll ask Severus' show them to you. Let's get dressed and we'll go do that."

Again Draco made to get up, but Harry moved quickly and Draco soon found himself lying flat on his back and straddled by a jeweled eyed beauty that was staring at him from under heavy eyelids. Draco groaned and gripped Harry's hips when the Gryffindor wet his lips. Draco stared at him in awe, again, overwhelmed by what he was feeling for the softly smiling Gryffindor. Why hadn't he told Harry how he felt about him yet? He knew Harry could feel most of it, but Draco wanted to physically say the words.

Every time he opened his mouth to do just that, something made him stop. He was ashamed to admit he was afraid. It was stupid because he could feel how Harry felt and it was the same as him, but Harry never said the words either and he didn't know how he would feel if Harry couldn't say them back when he said it. Draco figured Harry wasn't ready. So much had already happened in such little time it was understandable someone like Harry would need some time. Draco was just amazed he could feel this much so fast and still feel ready for it. He relished in every new feeling his relationship with Harry brought because like Harry, he never really thought he would have this.

Harry smirked, then licked his lips and slowly shifted over Draco, causing the blond to gasp when all his thoughts vanished to one. Draco arched his back off the bed to create as much friction as he possibly could, then collapsed boneless as Harry began to move against him on his own in slow torture while his eyes hungrily lapped at Draco's body, imprinting the image forever in his mind, before lowering his head to run his tongue along Draco's pale toned chest, across his nipples, eliciting erotic quivering gasps from the Slytherin. Harry reached down to grasp Draco's erection through his boxers, and closed his eyes in bliss at Draco's responsive hiss. Harry pressed Draco's cock up against his own while he continued to grind against him.

All of Draco's senses were starting to burn under the intense pleasure coming at him from the bond. It was nearly too much; feeling Harry's pleasure along with his own, but Draco wanted more and before the end, he was lost as he threw his head back and cried out Harry's name.

Harry kissed his way back up Draco's torso, his neck, and lingered on Draco's delicious mouth. Harry moved forward until his lips brushed Draco's ear, their hips continuing the frenzied pace.

\textbf{You're soso hot like thisss, Draco.}

Draco came with a sharp cry, digging his fingers into Harry's hips while his mate continued to rock back and forth until he came as well with only a sexy little whimper as he was left breathless at the end. They lay together, trying to regain their breath and senses, and Draco thought about going back to sleep and using Harry as a blanket. That sounded like a brilliant idea actually.
Unfortunately Harry had other ideas, and as soon as he could manage to move, he did. "Now we can get up." He pecked Draco on the lips and then bounced off him, the bed, and to the bathroom; leaving Draco sweaty, sticky, and still hot for his mate.

*I suppose I deserved that.* Draco grumbled before rolling out of the bed, his hair once again in need of maintenance. He sighed and went to his bathroom, casting scourgify on the mess in his boxers as he did so. "Open up, Harry!" Why in Merlin's name did Harry have to lock the door?

"No, I need a shower and if I let you in, you'll just distract me."

Draco smirked. That was true. "Distraction is usually fun," he said reasonably through the door.

"No."

"I need to fix my hair so let me in. I promise not to start anything."

Inside the bathroom, Harry sighed. It was Draco's hair, after all. And it would be terribly rude to make Draco wait before he could use his own bathroom. Wandlessly Harry unlocked the door, and then jumped into the massive shower, thankful that the glass doors surrounding the shower were opaque. Though Harry did have a moment's thought about how it might be if Draco joined him under the hot steaming water, and he had to bite his lip under the immense wave of lust that slammed into him when Draco walked in. Draco began to whistle and Harry assumed the Slytherin was working on his hair, which left Harry feeling half way disappointed Draco was keeping his promise.

Standing in front of the mirror, Draco's grin was predatory. Harry must not have any idea he was sending and Draco had no intention of letting on that he could hear Harry's thoughts. He didn't join Harry like they both wanted, because if he went in they'd do far more then get each other off by dry humping. Draco would make sure of that. He wouldn't be able to help himself. And since Harry had never had sex with a boy, Draco wanted to seduce his Gryffindor in a bedroom and on a bed and show Harry how it was possible to see multiple worlds at once. So Draco turned back to the mirror, after a moment of watching Harry's fuzzy form through the glass, and continued to fix his hair; looking forward to the time he could put his hands on Harry's body again.

Totally clueless as to what was going on inside of Draco's head, Harry went on with his shower, and was lost to his own thoughts under the hot steamy spray of the water. It was no surprise he started thinking about what he'd overheard last night. Figures he'd hear something like that. It was karma coming back at him for listening in the first place. But now he knew, the shock was gone too, leaving him feeling resigned and more secure in his thoughts about what he and Draco would do next.

Hermione and Ginny bolted through the door of Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes and sprinted to the front counter. It was never a good idea to linger around the door. More often than not, Fred and George would have it booby-trapped in order to prank hapless victims at their whim. Fortunately they made it to the front counter without a problem, but there was no one around. "Oi, Fred, George? Isn't there anyone who works here anymore?"

"Ginny!" Two similar cries came from the back, and a moment later, Fred, George, and much to Hermione and Ginny's displeasure, Ron came out from the back workroom.

"Ugh! What's he doing here?" Ginny hissed to Fred, while Ron made a beeline for Hermione.

"He's been driving Mum bonkers and she begged us to bring him to work. Not to mention the fact Mum has been going crazy because you're all living at Death Eater central."
"It's not really Death Eater central anymore. Voldemort made most of the Death Eaters leave while we're there," Hermione said, trying her hardest to ignore Ron's stare.

"No…. Really?"

"Yes."

Hermione pulled away from Ron and sidled up to Ginny and the twins. "Actually, we shouldn't be discussing this right now." Her eyes moved quickly to Ron then away again. The others caught on and nodded. "If you two want to know more speak to Charlie, or better yet, you should go see Harry and Draco. Hopefully they've stopped fighting by now."

"Oooh, trouble in paradise?" Fred asked and then smacked Ron at the back of the head when he made a gagging noise.

"Course there is. This is Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy we're talking about," George replied.

"Yeah, but with them being soul mates and under a bond, it's twice as bad. They're doing nothing but moping around, being stubborn and refusing to see each other…. it's maddening, really."

"Ginny!" Ron came up, his face red with impatience and fury. "You and Hermione need to come home, now! You can't seriously want to stay at Malfoy Manor? That's insane. You're going to turn into Dark witches!"

"Ronald, I'm not speaking to you until you recognize you're wrong about Harry and apologize to all of us for being such an uneducated idiot!" Ginny snarled, and then turned her back on him. Hermione gave him a sad smile, but by the set of her chin and stubborn light in her eyes, it was clear she would not be changing her mind about this either.

"You're all mad!" Ron's hands fisted at his sides and he held himself in check from hitting something.

"We knew that before, little bro. Didn't need to be reminded," Fred said and grinned with George. Ron stalked off to the back again without saying farewell to Ginny and Hermione, both relieved to see him go.

"We're having a surprise party for Harry tomorrow and we're all meeting at Snape Manor before going elsewhere," Hermione went on and ignored the twins' surprised looks. "And of course you two are invited. Just…make sure to respect Severus' home while we are there."

"This is a surprise party, you say? Means Harry doesn't know about it?" Fred looked at her oddly. "Did Draco speak to Snape about Harry's birthday?"

"No, Draco doesn't know about the party yet."

"So what you're telling us is…" Fred began.

"Old snarky Snape gave our Hermione Granger…"

"Gryffindor's resident know-it-all and muggleborn witch…"

"Permission to throw a surprise birthday party at his own house…"

"Is that what you're saying?" asked Fred at the finish.

"Yes, that's exactly right. And he calls her Hermione now," Ginny put in before skipping away
when Hermione raised her wand.

"We really must be going now, boys. Presents to buy, you know." Hermione waved and dashed after Ginny before the twins could start in on her.

"Snape's house?" George turned to his brother with a raised eyebrow. Fred grinned back. The twins nodded together and went back to make sure Ron didn't kill himself with one of their products.

Draco led Harry through the manor's corridors with a smirk on his face. He was about to break one of his father's most severe rules. Harry needed the Pensieve memories, and for that they needed Severus. A house elf had informed him Severus was in his father's private study, so that was where they were headed. To the private study that was completely off limits. Draco didn't care about the repercussions because there was nothing his father could do to them once they were there, not with the way Harry was brooding.

During his shower, Harry had worked himself into a furious frenzy and all Draco could do was hang on for the wild ride. Seriously, even Harry's hair was flying wildly around his face yet they were walking down a draft less corridor at a steady pace. Oh, and the power around the brunet was nearly stifling. And when they arrived at the study, Draco could feel his father's wards around the study crumbling under Harry's powerful magic and they were still ten feet away from the door.

And all of this was why Draco had a smug smirk on his face when he opened the door and allowed Harry to precede him into the room where Lucius and Severus sat at the large red wood desk discussing something quietly. Both Harry and Draco failed to notice the high backed chair facing the fireplace as Harry strode up to the desk and slapped his palm against it.

Harry's eyes bored into Severus like two jade arrows. "I want those fucking memories."

"Draco, you had better have a good explanation for this intrusion," Lucius drawled, standing up and pulling out his wand. Harry's eyes flashed into burning gold slits, and he threw a sharp-clawed hand out towards Lucius. The force of wandless magic knocked the elder Malfoy back, flipping him over the chair he'd been sitting in. Draco peered around the desk and stifled a snort when he saw his father was cast immobile.

"I want that old fuck's Pensieve memories now, Severus," Harry hissed.

Draco touched Harry's arm to calm him. As much as the Slytherin enjoyed swimming in the effects Harry's magic, he didn't fancy the study blowing up with all of them still inside. And Harry was displaying more traits at once then Draco ever did. His eyes had gone cat like again, except they were glowing an eerie green gold, and his fingernails had lengthened and sharpened, just as his teeth. And the last visible trait was Harry's ears, which had gone pointy, like... well he wasn't sure how to explain that. But Draco knew one thing; Harry was fascinating to look at.

"Harry James Potter," Severus spoke slowly, rising tentatively to his feet. There was so much anger swirling around the boy; Severus was surprised the place hadn't burned down yet. "You will control yourself and you will cease demanding of me as if you were older and wiser."

Severus also peered around the desk and raised an eyebrow at Lucius' state. Severus pulled his wand out, slowly for Harry's sake and tried to release Lucius from the hold. Only to find Lucius' binding completely solid and impenetrable by any spell Severus tried to use to break it. "You will release Lucius and leave. You should not be here," Severus had leaned forward and hissed the last part.

"Nonsense, Severus. I'd rather they stay. I would like very much to know more about these
memories."

Draco and Harry spun around, both trying to push the other behind him. "Get off, Draco!"

"How about you get off!"

"There really is no need for you to fight over who will be the one sacrificing themselves for the one they love today," Voldemort said as he rose from the chair. "I don't feel like killing anyone right now."

"Well that's good, Tom. Wouldn't want your top Death Eaters to see you fail miserably yet again."

"Harry!" hissed Draco and Severus, but the Dark Lord raised a hand and everyone stayed silent.

"You have so much nerve, Potter. So much anger." Voldemort stepped closer. "Yet you're really not angry with me, are y-"

Voldemort choked on his words. This time it was Harry who approached until he was nearly toe-to-toe with Voldemort. "Not really angry with you? Oh, I'm furious, Tom. I owe you for the last time we met. Do you remember? When you tried to kill my soul mate?" If possible, Harry's eyes grew brighter with the intent to have his revenge.

"What's wrong? Can't you get out of my freezing charm? Are you surprised my power has already outstripped yours, even when you've just gained more power... yes, I can feel it. This new power of yours. I wonder what you will use it for."

It took two minutes, but Voldemort did break free of Harry's curse and stared at the young wizard in wonder and fury. It became clear the moment the Dark Lord managed to push the fury away. "Have you not asked yourself why your head doesn't hurt when you're near me?" the Dark wizard finally asked. "Or why I've left you and your friends alone?"

"I haven't thought about it..."

"Yes you have."

Harry snarled at the black-cloaked figure before him. "Fine, then. Why are you not hurting me?"

"Perhaps there is something I want from you."

"We're listening," Draco responded before Harry could throw out another insult. Part of their major plans revolved on how civil the Dark Lord was willing to be with them and it wouldn't work if Harry pushed the Dark Lord too much because the Gryff hadn't gotten over nearly seven years of hatred.

Voldemort pushed back the hood of his cloak and Harry understood what Voldemort was trying to do. The first thing he noticed was the newly grown nose on the more white than gray face. Eew! The nose was hideously incomplete!

"You're trying to get your human body back; the one before you turned into this," Draco said, gaining a half grown brow quirt at the younger Malfoy's boldness in his dealings with the Dark Lord. It was good Draco had grown an intelligent mouth on him. Voldemort wouldn't have been able to see Draco Malfoy as Harry Potter's partner and equal otherwise.

"Well obviously you've screwed that up royally," Harry muttered, pacing a circle around Voldemort, checking every inch of him out. He caught the bright red flare in the eye sockets where eyes should have been. "We could fix that too."
Harry pushed the Pensieve memories aside for the moment, knowing this was a pivotal moment, and as such, he began transmitting all his thoughts automatically to Draco, so that he would understand why Harry was acting the way he was at the moment.

This is a brilliant plan, Harry. We would be unstoppable. I'll follow your lead.

Harry stopped right in front of Voldemort. "You've blocked our connection through the scar?"

"Yes."

Harry nodded, and touched Voldemort's face and only felt a mild irritation originate from his scar. I don't know how I can do this. It's probably the bond again.

That's amazing, Harry!

Severus' intake of breath alerted Voldemort that something had happened.

"What did you do?" he asked.

The Dark Lord didn't feel anything different, which only made him curious instead of wary. Draco walked up with a conjured mirror and held it up for Voldemort to see his own face. His reflection's dark brown eyes widened in surprise as his gaze took in his jet-black hair that hung to the base of his neck and swept out of his eyes. Voldemort reached up to touch the straight handsome nose of his youth, but pulled away when his pale spider-like hand came in view of the mirror, contrasting horribly with the smooth tanned skin he only dreamed of ever having again, destroying the illusion. Harry dropped his hand and Voldemort's face returned to its normal hideousness.

"I could help you get your old body back, Tom. You know the one; the body you gave up when you sold your soul to Satan!"

"Harry," Draco groaned. He yanked him back then took Harry's previous position. "What he means is, we can help with that."

Hope you're right about this. I don't fancy thinking about the consequences if we can't come through with this.

I promise you, I'm just getting this impulse to do these things. We can do this.

"What would I need to give for this?" Voldemort asked without hesitation. He needed a new, more human body. That was essential before he could do more. And he would do anything to achieve the means.

Severus managed to reach a chair before his legs gave out, and once more attempted to revive Lucius. To his surprise it worked. Seems Harry wasn't in complete control of his growing power, the brat! He couldn't believe the nerve of Harry bursting in on them…. then again, somehow Harry knew about Dumbledore's memories and he must know what is supposed to be on them. Did Harry overhear his discussion with Black, Lupin, and Lucius? Severus closed his eyes and nearly groaned. If Harry had heard, it probably was one of the worst moments of his life. And bloody fucking hell! He hadn't even let it be known he'd heard. He had to deal with it alone…

He looked up and realized that wasn't right. Harry hadn't been alone. He'd obviously gone to Draco, or Draco had gone to him, because they seemed back in sync again and were haggling with Voldemort over the terms of a new probationary alliance.

"Are you going to tell me what the fuck is going on?" Lucius hissed after dragging his chair over to
sit beside Severus.

"Just shut up and listen."

"I want your sniveling pet Peter Pettigrew and Her Royal Psychoness Bellatrix Lestrange. No questions asked," Harry said, laying his hands flat on the table.

Voldemort immediately nodded. "Done."

Harry grinned and began rubbing his hands together. "This is going to be wicked," he said to Draco, who grinned back when Harry sent him all the evil images being conjured in his mind. Oh yeah. Harry had some evil plans.

"If that is all…"

Draco held up a hand, and Voldemort stopped speaking immediately. And then his eye began to twitch and Draco hastily lowered his hand. "Erm…No, that isn't all. I want my mother sent away. I want her eradicated from the Malfoy name, leaving my father available to marry again if he so chooses."

Lucius sprung to his feet. "What are you doing? You can't demand that, Draco!"

"Quiet Father. I'm talking with the Dark Lord." Draco turned back to Voldemort and looked him square in the eye…Well, he looked into the red mist anyway. "I know you have people everywhere and I know you can make it happen."

"Are you saying you want her dead?" Voldemort asked and was surprised when Draco had to think about it.

"I suppose… not. She did give birth to me, after all. But I'll consider her my mother no longer, and she doesn't get a Galleon of the Malfoy fortune."

"Done."

"I cannot believe this is happening," Lucius whispered. "Can he do that? Remove Narcissa from the marriage?"

"Of course he can. It's been done before. But usually, people end up dead."

"I can't let you do this, Draco. I have my honor. It's why I married Narcissa in the first place-"

"You were forced into marrying her, Father. And now I'm forcing you to unmarry her."

"Unmarry is not a word," Harry whispered, and got an elbow in the gut for a reply.

"You should be thrilled, Lucius," the Potions Master commented. "It'll give you time to play in the park with the dog."

"Watch yourself, Severus."

"It's what you want, isn't it?"

Lucius hissed, "Severus."

Severus smirked and then he and Lucius continued to watch history in the making. Harry was tapping the table with his fingers, his nails gone back to normal by the time he'd touched Voldemort's
"One more thing from you, Tom. We want a Wizards Oath right here, right now. I want the Wizarding World protected from the Muggle world, just like you. However, I don't want muggleborns to be discriminated against if they don't deserve it. My friend Hermione has more raw power in her little finger then most wizard and witches have in their entire body, and I no longer want to see people like her being discriminated or tracked down and killed just because of their blood."

"I agree." This came from Draco. "Hermione has already proven to be a more than capable witch and she deserves to be here. It's not her fault or other muggleborns that they come to the Wizarding World without knowing anything about it."

"I have given your friend Miss Granger much thought and I can see why you keep each other's confidence. My opinion on that muggleborn has changed."

Severus and Lucius' mouths dropped open.

"And others?" Draco asked. Voldemort sneered and Draco flinched at the nastiness of the vacant smile.

"I will try my best."

"You will take a Wizards Oath," Draco stated. "You will not put our plans in jeopardy because you've decided to go psycho again."

Voldemort turned and looked at Lucius. "You finally taught your son to be a man, Lucius." The Dark Lord sounded pleased and Lucius really hated to disappoint him.

"Ah, actually, my Lord. I'm sure I'm not the cause for that."

"No, it definitely is not your doing, Father." Draco turned back to matters at hand and missed his father's pained flinch. "The three of us will take the Wizards Oath. I don't want to have to watch my back every time you're around, and I'm sure you will feel the same. We don't want any backstabbing done, now do we? A Wizards Oath or nothing at all. I will not have Harry worrying about you at every minute of every day."

"Fine. I will take the Oath."

Before long, Harry, Draco, and Voldemort stood in a three-man circle and cast the Wizarding Oath, ensuring none of the three could betray the others. Harry wondered why he was doing this so soon into the game. He'd planned on making some sort of white flag to rise between them, ending things and letting it be known Harry was happy to go his own way and stay the hell out of Voldemort's way, but this almost felt like the beginning of something and it felt right. But how could it feel that way when Voldemort was the one to put the scar on his head?

"I need to see those memories. I need to see what happened."

"I'll think I'll join you in watching Dumbledore's memories. Severus, where are they?"

"My lord, I've hidden the memories in the place they were created in."

"Ah, right under Dumbledore's nose. Well done. You will go collect them at once."

"Yes, my lord." Severus bowed to Voldemort before turning towards the door.
"I'm coming with you." Harry stepped in stride with Severus as his uncle headed for the door. He looked back to see if Draco was coming, but Lucius had blocked his son's way.

"You'll not be going, Draco. We have some things to discuss. Immediately."

_You go on, Harry. And please be careful. I know that it's hard for your idiotic Gryffindor mind to grasp, but you need to think things through before jumping head first into a situation._ Harry rolled his eyes as he walked down the corridor with Severus. _Dumbledore is still looking for you. He'll have people watching Godric's Hollow, expecting you'll want to visit your family's home now that you're able to, so be careful._

_You're worrying too much. Go talk with your father. I'll be fine._ Harry heard Draco's mental sigh and smiled.

"Wipe that smile off your face, Harry." The tone in his uncle's voice told him Severus was not in the least bit amused or pleased with the situation.

"Did you expect me to stay calm after I found out about it?"

"No, which is why I wanted to wait to tell you."

"I should have been told the moment you viewed those memories."

"Perhaps, but that doesn't excuse your behavior when you first entered!"

They stopped at the front doors and Severus was glaring down at Harry, causing the young wizard to fidget with his robes. Dammit. He hated being in the wrong.

"I'm sorry, all right."

"You could have hurt, Lucius."

Harry raised an eyebrow as if asking, 'really? Are you really lecturing me on hurting that man after all he's done to me?'. Instead he said, "he was raising his wand at Draco." End of discussion.

"I have to admit, the magic you displayed was incredible. How did you do that to the Dark Lord's face?"

"Not sure. It was like an impulse. A natural instinct I'd never felt before. And that's why I'm positive I can get his body back, even though I have no clue how at the moment. That instinct is telling me it can be done."

They began to walk outside to beyond the wards where they could Apparate. _It may be an instinct and power available to the magical creature you will become._

"That seems most likely. And you know what that means?" he asked, suddenly excited. Severus rose a brow. "It means Draco and I will still be able to use magic! We won't just be magical creatures! We'll still have magic of our own."

"Yes. Powerful magic."

"Yeah!" Harry grinned brightly and Severus felt a smile worm its way onto his face. _It seems so strange," his nephew went on, "that I can take things like this without blinking, but when I hear that my father killed my mother, I go blank. I guess it's just that I came from living with people who were Muggles in the strictest sense of the word, and then when I was shown this world, I was so full of_
wonder. I took everything in, cherished everything. At first seeing magic was very strange for me, but it's a part of me and it didn't take much to get used to it. Everyday there was something else to see until now I'm not really surprised by anything anymore. Personally I think anything is possible with magic."

"Imagine what you can do when you gain your Inheritance and can control the power. Imagine what you and Draco can do. Almost anything…"

"You sound wistful, Severus."

"Hardly. But I must admit, my ambitions have begun rising again." Harry grinned at that. Severus usually never came out with optimistic remarks.

Just before they Apparated, Harry brought up the subject of Dumbledore guarding Godric's Hollow.

"Draco's correct. There will be Order members watching and no less than two members at that. This is what comes from demanding things. We haven't had time to contact Lupin or Weasley…"

"It can't be too hard to take care of them. If we're lucky, it might be Remus or Charlie there, and if we're fantastically lucky, it will only be the two of them there."

"It does you no good to think like that. Dumbledore will not have either of them guarding the Hollow. Despite being in the Order and supposedly loyal to Dumbledore, he would never trust them with this because they are too close to you for him to even consider it."

Harry made a noncommittal sound as Severus held him around the waist, and then they disappeared. They landed in a field nearly three miles away from Godric's Hollow.

"Three miles?" Harry asked, gaping incredulously at his uncle when Severus said as much. "Why did you make it so far away?"

Severus began speaking slowly, punctuating on each syllable. "Because, you nitwit, we want to sneak up on the Order members and take them by surprise."

"Three miles out in the middle of nowhere seems extreme."

"Close your mouth and pick up your feet."

Harry huffed, but he did obey and they began to walk in silence. Harry tuned in to see what Draco was doing and was amused when he found his soul mate was getting the talking to of a lifetime. But at least Lucius was hanging on to his temper and didn't seem to be so angry that he would harm his son.

That is because he's afraid of what you would do to him. Draco thought back to him and then resumed listening to his father pretend to be angry with the fact that Narcissa was being sent away, she would no longer be a Malfoy, and she wouldn't have one more Galleon of the Malfoy fortune. Oh, yeah…sure. I can see why he would be mad…Riiight.

Harry laughed out loud at that, and then quieted down when Severus glared at him.

"Why can't we talk now? I hate silence."

"Talk to Draco."

"No, he's busy with his father. Does Lucius really care that his marriage is about to be annulled? I
was under the impression he doesn't like his wife very much. I'm under the impression no one likes her very much."

"Lucius is probably ecstatic, but he can't really go jumping around announcing it to the world. He has an image to maintain and doesn't want people to think he willingly went along with this."

"I think I can understand that." There was more silence for the next half mile before Harry broke again. "Tell me more about what Dumbledore has done."

Surprisingly, Severus nodded. "Do you know why you never received specific training to be able to handle combating the Dark Lord?"

"No. But I've wondered why he seemed so set on letting me wing it when it was time for me to kill Voldemort."

"It's because the prophecy is a complete fabrication, Harry." He nodded when Harry stopped dead and stared at him incredulously. "There was never a real prophecy made about Voldemort marking the one he considers his equal, nor was there anything that said you would have to vanquish him or die. Dumbledore had the whole thing staged."

Harry's hands balled into fists and he squeezed his eyes closed. Severus waited patiently for the boy to reign in his temper. Finally Harry's eyes popped open and he released a hiss. "I knew Trelawney was full of shit! And Voldemort doesn't know?"

"Yes, he knows now. When I discovered I'd been tricked into overhearing part of the prophecy, and in turn was the reason why the Dark Lord fell for Dumbledore's trap, I felt alerting the Dark Lord would be best."

"And you're still here, breathing? I'm amazed he didn't kill you."

"I didn't exactly walk away in the best of shape. But… my Lord has been thinking more clearly recently. I do believe that is why I am still breathing now. I told him about the prophecy being fabricated directly after he tried to kill Draco within your mind."

"That's why he's changing then. He doesn't want to fit into Dumbledore's plans anymore either. He's not going to continue to do things the way he did before because that's just what Dumbledore wanted from Voldemort. He wants the Wizarding World in chaos."

Severus nodded. "You see a lot, Harry. Maybe that's why Dumbledore never wanted to tell you anything. He was afraid you would eventually start questioning things, and knowing you, you would go off and find the truth on your own."

"Has Dumbledore done anything else?"

"If he has, I know nothing about it." They'd walked quite a bit as they talked and Severus soon spotted the village of Godric's Hollow in the distance and the church steeple and the tops of houses glinting from the midday sun.

Severus stopped their trek through a field. "Did you bring your invisibility cloak?"

Harry's eyes went wide, and he smacked his forehead. "No," he muttered. "I completely forgot."

Severus rolled his eyes. Figures. "We'll have to keep silent from here. We go around to the west and come through from the back of the graveyard. I know you would like to see your parents, Harry-"
"No, not right now. Not while Dumbledore's people are around. Our mission right now is to get the Pensieve memories. I'll come back another time." His uncle gave him an understanding look and squeezed his shoulder. "I want to ask you something before we continue, Severus."

"Go on."

"Why do you still follow Voldemort?"

"Because Voldemort gets things done. We all want to see changes. To keep our world protected and advance. He has the power to do that when he's not constantly being distracted by old manipulating power hungry fools."

"So why not stop being his follower and just work with us. I can't stand to watch you bow at his feet, Severus. You are better than that."

"I…I appreciate your thoughts. But you've forgotten who I am, I think. I'm still a Death Eater, Harry. The Dark Mark still goes black on my arm. I have no choice but to be a follower of the Dark Lord. He can still kill me Harry, and he will regardless of the alliance you've made if he thinks I will leave him again."

"It's a probationary alliance," Harry muttered darkly. If Voldemort wanted Harry and Draco to help him recover his old body, then he was going to have to stop treating Severus like a pet…. and maybe Lucius too.

They walked on and remained silent. Sulking in silence was something Harry knew best how to do, and he used the time to do that, but always stayed alert and watchful of their surroundings. He'd be damned if he let Dumbledore get the best of him again.

"Look sharp," Severus muttered after he'd placed Disillusionment Charms on them as they entered the deathly quiet graveyard. Harry thought it was too bad the sun was out, it would have fit his mood better had it been raining and it wouldn't have felt like they were out in the open if the sky were clouded.

They kept to the shadows provided by the line of trees that followed the empty dirt road the two of them were heading down. Halfway down the lane Severus saw the Potter house come into view.

"You will wait for me here. I will return shortly."

"But."

"No. It will be easier if one person goes in. The Order members Dumbledore sent are probably invisible or at least disillusioned. And you haven't learned how to spot a witch or wizard when under an enchantment."

Harry knew he was right so he nodded and leaned against a tree and watched Severus make his way closer to the house until his uncle disappeared from sight all together. Harry kept an alert eye on the house; though it didn't do much good as he couldn't see that well and could only make the house out as a grayish brown blur.

This is crap! He should have argued with Severus and gone with him. He wanted to help, not stand on the sidelines and watch like a damn baby!

Calm down, Harry. You're going to alert the Order of your presence if you allow your magic to take control of you.
I hate waiting.

So do I. Draco purred at him.

Harry straightened from the tree and pulled on his collar. Draco, I'm supposed to be watching for the enemy and if you talk like that you'll only distract me… and it doesn't calm me down at all.

Fine destroy my fun!

Hey, when I get back lets go play Quidditch. We can play a Seeker game.

I'll go for that. Without all your Gryffindork teammates, I'll finally be able show you who's the best Seeker.

But we already know who the best Seeker is. I wouldn't set your heart on catching that Snitch with me in the air.

Whatever, Potter. You are so on.

Fine, bring it Malfoy.

Harry was grinning madly at the prospect of being able to play Draco one on one with the Golden Snitch when he suddenly heard a yelled curse and a small explosion came from the direction of the house. He immediately took off running, holding his wand out in front of him, looking for any signs of hidden wizards along the way. Draco, need to go. Something's happening.

Draco must have heard the urgency in Harry's tone. Do you need help?

No. I'll let you know if we need backup.

Tell me right away, Harry. Don't keep quiet because you want to keep others from getting hurt by helping you.

Harry reached the end of the lane and crouched down beside the old stonewall surrounding the house. When he peeked over the low wall and saw the front of the house, Harry tried not to see the sad old broken structure as the place where he lived with his parents up until their murders, and instead began looking for Order members. He found three of them, two lying in the lawn just outside of the front door and the third Order member was Mad Eye Moody, and through the burnt out hole from upstairs, Harry could see Severus was dueling the one legged wizard.

Harry ran into the house and scanned the area. Someone must have cleaned the house out because now it only looked like a burnt rotting shell. Pushing away the feelings that thought brought on, Harry raced upstairs to where most of the destruction had taken place. He could hear the duel continuing and would have run into the room, but a heavy hand dropped on his shoulder from behind and he felt the Disillusionment Charm fade away. Harry cursed fluently for getting himself caught.

"Whoa there, Harry," said a voice in a slow smooth baritone, and the hand forced Harry to turn around. He already knew he was going to see Kingsley Shacklebolt towering over him, but he was surprised to see the tall black Auror did not have his wand pointed at him. "Snape can handle old Mad Eye, don't you worry."

"Shouldn't you be worried about Mad Eye then?"

"No. He can take care of himself too."
"Look Shacklebolt. Severus is my uncle and I'm not going to stand here and let you distract me while Mad Eye tries to kill him. He's my family!"

"Calm down. I'm not trying to distract you. I want to know what you and Snape are doing here. You must have known we'd be watching the place."

"I can't believe you were actually picked for the stake out," Harry said. He really didn't think it was a good idea to tell Kingsley the reason he and Severus were at Godric's Hollow. "You're the top Auror, Shacklebolt. What the hell are you doing here?"

Kingsley grinned, showing his white teeth. Harry nearly had to shield his eyes from the brightness. "Oh he tired. Wasn't happy with me from our last meeting. He knew I wasn't pleased with bringing you in. Which I still have no intention of doing."

"You're not?"

"Obviously not. Otherwise I would have stunned you first and asked questions later. But since that order came from Dumbledore and not the Ministry, I don't feel like I'm breaking any rules by leaving you alone. The only reason why I'm here is because I came to speak to Sturgis Podmore, whom I see Snape already got a hold of. Hestia Jones as well. But they never had a chance against Snape anyway…" Harry held his hand up and Kingsley's wide eyes were the only indication that he was surprised by the power Harry had over him.

"So you are not here to watch this house? And you're not here to bring me to Dumbledore or arrest Severus?"

"No."

"Good." Harry turned back to the room and yelled, "hurry the up, Severus! You should have knocked him out by now. You're half his age!" He turned back to a grinning Kingsley when Severus 'accidentally' let a curse fly by Harry's ear.

"So tell me why you are here and don't change the subject again. We'll not be leaving until you answer me truthfully."

Harry sighed. He wouldn't be able to lie. Kingsley was trained to spot things like that. "We've come to collect evidence of Dumbledore's wrong doings. And no I will not hand it over. Not until I've seen it enough to have memorized every little thing."

"As an Auror I have the right to take what it is you find as evidence."

"You have the right, but you don't have the power or the backup and I won't give it to you until I'm ready. The evidence is very personal and as far as I'm concerned no one but those involved in the event the evidence entails should be privy to the information."

Kingsley studied him for a moment. Harry assumed Kingsley was trying to ascertain whether he was telling the truth about the evidence, and probably trying to gouge how strong Harry was. Harry was hoping he had sounded mature enough for the Auror. Kingsley was powerful himself, as well as being very intelligent and generally a good person, which was why Harry liked him. Harry would have liked to associate with the black Auror, but he wasn't sure he could include Kingsley in his future plans. The man was as straight as an arrow when it came to the law as far as he knew, and Harry planned to do things that weren't entirely legal. Well okay, they weren't legal at all and Kingsley was a principled reformer.

Finally Kingsley nodded. "I'll let you take whatever you're here to find, but if Dumbledore has done
something that has put the Wizarding World in danger, you should let us know, Harry. I know you never liked it when you were kept in the dark."

"Low, Kingsley. Real low," Harry muttered darkly, but the Auror continued to grin at him. "Fine. You'll be hearing from me then. Feel free to tell Dumbledore all we've talked about, I'm sure he'd like to know what I'm up to."

"I will not be informing Dumbledore of even my presence here, but I am curious as to what your plans are."

"I plan to return to Hogwarts in September, of course. I have to finish sch-

"Expulso!" Harry barely had time to process Moody's shouted curse before the wall exploded out on top of him, burying him under a load of heavy concrete and plaster. The last thing he remembered before losing consciousness was seeing Kingsley's surprised and horrified face and Harry wasn't sure, but he thought he heard Severus scream his name. As he slipped into a quiet blackness he vaguely realized blood was pouring down his face like a small waterfall.
Draco was sitting in the library with Hermione when he felt Harry go unconscious. He threw his book to the table and started running, leaving no explanation for Hermione.

"Draco? What's wrong?"

Draco ignored her and kept running, and soon found his father where he'd left him.

"We have to go! Harry's been hurt. He's unconscious!" Draco skidded to a halt inside his father's study where Lucius was calmly talking with Voldemort. "Didn't you hear me? Harry and Severus are under attack!"

Lucius stood and bowed to the Dark Lord. "My lord…"

"Yes, yes, Lucius. Go now. Mustn't let Harry and Severus have all the fun…"

"Fun?" Draco croaked, then he reigned in his terror and desperation and began to build his word army for a verbal tirade aimed at the Dark Lord, but Lucius was by his son's side and grabbed Draco by the neck.

"Come, Draco. Let us go and help your lover." Lucius proceeded to drag Draco forcibly from the room. "You cannot go around losing your temper like your little Gryffindor, Draco. It's undignified as well as unhealthy when it comes to doing it around the Dark Lord."

"I am not his follower, Father. In case you missed it, we made an alliance with him and that makes me one third of a partnership. I will bow to no one."

Draco didn't know it, but Lucius had never been so proud of him than he was at that very moment. But maybe Lucius was letting his feelings known by showing it on his face, because Draco's eyes widened in astonishment when he looked up at his father.

Lucius cleared his throat and hurried down the corridor, leaving Draco to follow behind in somewhat of a daze. "Let's find Siri and get to Godric's Hollow."

Sirius was wandering the manor, again, thinking about Lucius, again. Dammit! There was nowhere he could go here that didn't remind him of the blond haired poncy bastard who once saw fit to rip Sirius' heart to shreds, then freeze it, just to smash it and watch it explode into dust particles. What the hell was he doing at Malfoy Manor anyway? Okay, so he loved Harry and wanted to support him, but staying here was killing him and he didn't think he could stay any longer without making a fool of himself in front of Lucius. At least he didn't have to see his bitch cousins. He'd probably try to kill Narcissa…again.

"Sirius!" he turned around from the window he'd been staring out of and cursed under his breath when he saw it was both Malfoys coming towards him.

"What is it?"
Draco ran up to Sirius and immediately Animagus was alert, pushing his thoughts about the elder Malfoy away. Though he wasn't so focused on Draco that he didn't notice the way Lucius' hips swayed as he walked. Nor did he miss the coy look on Luce's face as he gazed back at his onetime Gryffindor lover. That look was always able to sway Sirius in any decision, not to mention making Sirius as horny as hell and Lucius knew this. What the hell was he playing at?

"Harry needs our help now! He's at Godric's Hollow."

"Let's go."

Severus had half a mind to forget to miss Harry the next time he 'accidentally' shot a curse his nephew's way. The nerve of that Gryffindor! Severus' internal rant was interrupted when Moody sent a nasty severing hex his way and Severus countered with Sectumsempra and managed to cut Mad Eye's good leg open. Moody fell onto his side and screamed curses at Severus; missing him each time. Severus moved around Moody until he was back against the wall. Even injured Mad Eye was a force to be reckoned with.

"You bastard, Snape! You and your nephew," Moody spat the last word out like it was a disease, and Severus had a huge urge to cast the killing curse. He would no longer allow anyone to speak about Harry like that. "You and your nephew will be six feet under before the year is out, I guarantee it."

"Don't bet on it, Moody. Tell Dumbledore a new alliance has been made. An alliance that is too powerful for Dumbledore to fight against. His days are ending. You tell him that." Severus then used the shock spell on Moody, and cackled happily as he watched the old geezer thrashing around on the ground while his body was getting hit by continuous shocks of electrical energy, frying his nerves. Moody was able to fight the spell off long enough to shout out another curse.

"Expulso!"

Severus dove out of the way just in time but he heard Harry's surprised cry as the wall exploded out. As Severus fell he shot a painful curse Moody's way, breaking all of the older wizard's ribs into pieces. Coming out the victor in this duel.

"Harry!"

Severus picked himself off and ran into the hall and found Kingsley on his knees in front of the pile of wall where Harry's hands were sticking out from underneath all the damage. "Gods! Gods, Harry!" Severus sunk down beside Kingsley and began to help move the rubble off his nephew.

"Harry, can you hear me?"

"I think he's unconscious, Snape."

"I can see that, thank you!" Severus snapped. Kingsley noted the worry from Severus and didn't pay any attention to the attitude he was getting.

"What happened to Moody?"

Severus sneered and continued to work on the rubble. Kingsley got up quickly to check on Alastor. Noting he wasn't dead but would be if he were allowed to just lay there, the Auror grabbed Moody and Apparated him to St. Mungo's, mentally promising to return and help Severus as soon as he saw Moody in the hands of Healers.

Severus worked alone for nearly ten minutes, having to hand lift the particles off Harry's back. He
didn't want to use magic in case of doing Harry's back further injury. "Merlin, he's losing too much blood..." Severus murmured when everything was removed from Harry and he could see the floor beneath Harry's head was turning red with the blood he was losing. Kingsley Apparated back in that moment and saw the panic on Severus' face.

"Easy Snape. Let's assess the damage first. Panic later." Severus sneered at Kingsley, but said nothing as the Auror performed the basic diagnostic spell.

"He's alive. Spine's still intact."

"He's lucky for that. Second time he's gotten away with it when he should have come out with his back broken."

"What happened the first time?"

"The man Dumbledore sent Harry to live with in Surrey pushed him down the stairs."

*Well now, Kingsley thought. That's information Dumbledore failed to mention at the last Order meeting.* It would explain why some of the Order members had looked less than pleased with Albus Dumbledore at the last Order meeting. The pops of Apparition filled the air, making the Auror tense, and a moment later Kingsley heard someone shouting Harry's name.

Severus sighed and pushed Kingsley over towards the wall. "You'll want to make room," he warned the Auror, who gave him a strange look. "Harry's soul mate."

"Ah." Kingsley stood and leaned against the remaining less damaged wall and watched as Draco Malfoy came barreling up the stairs.

"Oh Merlin, oh Merlin, oh Merlin..." Dropping to his knees beside Harry, he lowered his hands to Harry's head, checking the skull for fractures and bumps to heal. He located and healed one very large bump at the back of Harry's head, which Draco thought to be the source of the bleeding and only flinched slightly at the pain he felt when doing so. Then he moved on to Harry's neck, shoulders, arms...and all the way down, and gently rolled Harry over. Five gasps rendered the silence.

"Baby, you're all right... You're all right.... Please be all right." Draco reached out with trembling hands, tears threatening to spill from his eyes and grasped Harry's forehead in his hands, ignoring all the blood painting his hands crimson. It was really hard for Draco to look at the wound because the top front of Harry's head had taken the most force from the blast and had left a wide gaping fracture.

"Draco," his father spoke softly. "Maybe you shouldn't try to heal this. We have no idea what will happen to you with an injury this extensive. We'll take him to St. Mungo's."

"No! No, I can't leave him like this.... I can't."

Draco focused on Harry and didn't notice when Lucius and Sirius took places beside him while Severus knelt behind Draco, leaning forward until his chest was pressed against his godson's back and placing his hands over Draco's to lend the young Slytherin support in his healing. From one side of Harry, Lucius bent forward and covered Severus' hands and looked at his missed lover. Sirius did not hesitate and added his hands to the pile. Draco closed his eyes and started the healing process.

Because of the bond, only Draco could feel the side effects of the healing, which was why he was the only one to start screaming as if a dull knife was trying to cut into his head. The other wizards immediately let go of his hands so that Draco could remove them from Harry's head, but as soon as they did, Draco's anguished cries reached a new level and they hastily put their hands back,
reasoning they had been a help after all. After realizing what was happening and seeing how the others were helping Draco heal Harry's head, Kingsley knelt down beside Sirius and added his hands. Draco's screams died down to whimpers, but he continued to tremble and perspire from the remaining pain until after nearly a minute when his grip on Harry slackened and he fell over onto his side, going unconscious from the pain. When Severus looked, the wide open fracture on Harry's head had closed and the bleeding stopped. Still they needed to get Harry to the hospital to make sure there was no internal bleeding and repair brain damage if there was any.

Hermione and Ginny were relaxing in the Malfoy library. Well, Ginny was relaxed as she was currently napping at the table next to Hermione's where the older girl was studiously researching different magical creatures for Harry and Draco. The door opened and Hermione looked up to see who entered and nearly shrieked. Walking towards her at a leisurely pace was the tall thin form of Voldemort, his red eyes gleaming brightly at her beneath his black hood. Hermione slowly closed the book and stood; every part of her body trembling, every nerve screaming at her to panic and at the same time reminding her that being calm would get better results.

"Ginny." She backed away towards the next desk beside hers as Voldemort came to stop at her table and sat in her recently vacated chair, looking down to see what the witch had been reading. "Ginny!" she hissed as she reached for her friend and in her fear, shook Ginny a little too roughly.

"Oi, Hermione! Not so hard! What's wrong with you?" Ginny snapped after picking her head off the desk and wiping the drool off her chin.

"I'm sorry, but…Look!"

"No need to be frightened, Miss Granger," Voldemort spoke in a lazy drawl. Ginny gasped and jumped to her feet while Voldemort continued to speak. He ignored the two wands trembling in the girls' hands. "I've come for a visit. Sit down."

He gestured to the two chairs at the opposite side of his desk. Hermione blinked. Those chairs hadn't been there before, and Voldemort hadn't spoken a spell to conjure or summon them. Not to mention he didn't even have his wand out, thank Merlin!

Ginny was at a loss of what to do. She had her wand out, as did Hermione, but Voldemort's wand was still tucked away. And even if it was out and pointed at them, there really wasn't anything they could do that would stop him. Looking over at Hermione, she saw the bushy haired girl was feeling the same and had no idea how to proceed. Do they go along with it and sit down for a visit and hope for the best? It seemed like the only possible option. Ginny didn't think throwing curses at Voldemort first and then trying to make a run for it would be effective at all. Didn't seem like a very good plan. Ginny made her decision, and instead of letting the hysterical laughter burst out of her mouth, she nodded at Hermione and took a seat. Hermione did the same, slowly.

"You want to sit with a blood traitor and a mudblood?" Hermione asked after digging around inside and finding her cowering Gryffindor courage.

"I am curious about you two. Why are you here where you could be in harm's way?"

"We are here because we want to be."

"That's not exactly true, is it? You are here to support Potter, correct?" Without waiting for an answer, Voldemort nodded and stood, causing both girls enormous fright. "Feel free to relax. I will not hurt you."
"But you hate us!" Ginny yelled; her fear and confusion throwing all caution to the wind. If they were about to die, the least Voldemort could do was be honest and blunt about it. "I'm a blood traitor, for Merlin's sake!"

"And I'm a mudblood. Why aren't you trying to kill us yet?"

"Is it your wish to die by my hands today?" Voldemort asked, his wand suddenly in his hand. "If so, I can accommodate you." He began to raise his wand to Ginny's face.

"No!" the witches yelled together, throwing their hands up in surrender. "We're fine! Sorry. We're happy to be alive!"

"Good." Voldemort tucked his wand away again. "Shall we move on?"

"Yes, please," they murmured. Voldemort walked around and placed a gray hand on Hermione's head. She flinched, remembering all of Harry's reactions to Voldemort's touch, and expected to feel agonizing pain. She was surprised when she only felt the weight of his hand upon her head.

"For a muggleborn, you have much worth." Hermione's lips parted in shock. "I concede, Potter is lucky to have someone such as you at his side. He has you to trust him and he trusts you as well, making it easy for him to gain by listening to your logical advice. I trust only myself, Miss Granger, and Potter has that as an advantage over me." Voldemort quieted and looked at the hand on Hermione's head and suddenly her memories started to flick by in front of her mind's eyes like a slide show. "Potter should listen to you more."

"Er…You-Know…Voldemort?" Hermione wasn't sure what to call him, and she thought insulting him by getting it wrong would be a very bad idea. "If you're not planning on killing us, can I ask you not to mind rape me like that again?"

Ginny couldn't help it. She snorted. But all amusement died away when Voldemort's eyes glowed red for a moment.

"I may have said I do not plan to kill you, but that doesn't mean the plan is permanent." Slowly he walked around the table to take his seat.

"This is tremendously odd," Hermione whispered. Ginny nodded stiffly.

"Yes it is."

"Um…sir?"

"Yes, Miss Granger?" Voldemort was amused. She obviously was unsure how to address him now. And the entire situation rang of hilarity. He actually had no idea why he was speaking with these witches.

"I was only wondering…is it still your intention to eradicate the world of Muggles?"

The library was suddenly filled with a terrible high-pitched laugh. "Is that what Dumbledore has been spewing to his students?"

"It's not just Dumbledore…"

"No, but he started telling people this nonsense and it took hold. But eradicate all Muggles? Even if that were a plan of mine at one point, I know that goal is futile."
"Then what?"

"Miss Weasley, you are a pureblood therefore you know about our society, our ways of life, etc. Correct?"

"Yes of course."

"And do you want our standard of living to be tainted by Muggle traditions?"

"Well, not really."

"Ginny?"

"It's not that, Hermione. I don't mind Muggles, but I can see what he means. When muggleborns come to the Wizarding World, they come without any knowledge of this world, just like Harry did. And instead of being taught our ways, they are allowed to come here and bring in Muggle traditions. This isn't the Muggle world, but eventually it might as well be, because the more muggleborn children who come here and continue to disregard our traditions, the faster the Wizarding World's history will be lost….."

"Why haven't any of the Wizarding schools instilled a mandatory curriculum for muggleborns?"

Hermione asked, looking at Voldemort. "I was surprised when I arrived at Hogwarts and there were no classes to integrate us here. It's not our fault we come here not knowing anything and continue to live the only way we know how…. How are we supposed to take pride in the Wizarding World and maintain the traditions of wizards and witches if we don't know anything about it?"

"This is true, Miss. Granger. And you are right. I believe--"

"Ginny!" All three occupants of the library turned towards the door and a moment later Blaise appeared with Pansy just behind him. Ginny smirked at the horrified looks on the Slytherins' faces when they realized whom she and Hermione were sitting with.

"It seems you have visitors." Lord Voldemort stood and nodded at the two Gryffindor witches.

"Miss Granger, I encourage you to research the *Ukatae*. The information you find will be extremely helpful. And I would like to hear more of your ideas later."

Voldemort made his way to the door. Pansy and Blaise jumped out of the doorway and stared at the Dark Lord. In so much shock that they forgot to kneel when he passed them.

"Mr. Zabini, Miss. Parkinson." The Slytherins continued to watch motionless as the Dark Lord glided down the corridor and disappeared around a corner.

Blaise regained his mind first and sprinted to Hermione and Ginny's table. "Are you two all right? What did he do to you?"

"We're fine." Ginny stood up so Blaise could have her chair and then she sat back down in his lap. Hermione remained where she was and watched with narrowed eyes as Pansy sat down across from them.

"Do you think we brainwashed Voldemort as well, Parkinson?" she snapped.

Earlier Draco told Hermione that he'd written Pansy a long letter explaining everything that had happened, and why and how he could be so happy with Harry. Pansy had had no idea Draco had been holding a torch for years for Harry. Draco recited the letter word for word to Hermione to ask her opinion on whether she thought it would help Pansy understand why he had changed so much in
regards to Harry and his friends.

Hermione never knew Draco had such a beautiful way with words and by the time he finished explaining his feeling for Harry, she had tears in her eyes. She told Draco the letter should work and help Pansy see reason. But two days had passed and Draco hadn't gotten word back from the Slytherin girl.

"Look, Hermione. It was just hard to take it all in. I received Draco's letter and I read it five consecutive times…" Pansy looked down at her hands and tears started to fall. "I'm really happy for Draco," she sobbed, though her cries were anything but happy. "Harry will be good to him, right?" Pansy asked before lowering her face to her hands.

Hermione jumped from her chair and hurried around to wrap her arm around the trembling Slytherin. "Oh…of course he will. Harry loves Draco and he'll do anything for him. Just like Harry would do anything for any of us."

Pansy turned in her chair so that she could wrap her arms around Hermione, crying against her stomach. "Pansy, what's wrong?"

"I left him! I didn't even try to understand, and then I got his letter and I didn't reply because I was jealous. I was so jealous of him and Harry! When's it my turn?" Pansy started wailing again and Hermione looked over at Blaise and Ginny for help. Blaise look undisturbed which probably meant he'd been dealing with Pansy's mood all day, while Ginny was nodding her head with Pansy.

"Pansy, I was jealous too. It's hard not to be."

"That's true," Hermione agreed. "But don't worry. You'll find your man soon enough. It's not like we're old and about to die."

Pansy raised her head and sniffed. "Really? Do you think so?"

"Of course. Now why don't we go find Draco so you can put his mind at ease? He's been worried ever since he wrote to you and it didn't help that he and Harry were fighting at the time."

Pansy smirked and stood. "Blaise told me all about that. Would have loved to see their makeup session."

"Yes! That's what I was telling Hermione," Ginny said. Hermione shook her head. Ginny was incorrigible.

Pansy turned back to Hermione and stuck out a hand. "Friends, Hermione? I've already cried all over you, but I figured we'd make this official."

"I think I'd like that, Pansy." Hermione and Pansy shook hands.

"Good, let's go find Draco, let him and Pansy make up, and then plan a spectacular seventeenth surprise birthday party for Harry!" Ginny said exuberantly and jumped off of Blaise's lap, winking at him when Blaise casually slid his hand over her bum as she moved away.

They left the library and headed up to Draco's wing of the manor, only to find his room empty. When they checked Harry's room, it too was empty.

"Well, where are they?"
"Shagging in a closet maybe," Blaise suggested.

"Why would they choose a closet when they have perfectly good beds here?" Ginny asked.

"Oh, well, love... Draco has these fantasies, see? Concerning your Chosen One. He's stocked piled all sorts of unrealized fantasies and knowing Draco, now that he's finally got his hands on Potter, he's going to fulfill them as soon as possible."

Hermione cleared her throat. "I... that was unnecessary information, Blaise."

The Slytherin only shrugged.

They headed back downstairs and were just crossing the Entrance Hall when Lucius appeared before them. "Harry and Draco have been taken to St. Mungo's. Harry was in a bad accident, Draco tried to heal him, and now they are both unconscious."

"Are they all right?" Blaise asked. Lucius nodded.

"But they will have to stay overnight. You may visit them. I put all your names on the list of allowed visitors."

Ginny huffed. "Can't Harry stay out of trouble for even a moment?"

"He can't honestly help it," Hermione replied, both her and Ginny sharing a fond smile before Ginny turned to Lucius.

"Did you come back here to let us know the boys were hurt?" Lucius nodded.

"Thank you, sir." Hermione said. "That means a lot to us."

"Nonsense. You four are their friends and it's your right to know."

"All the same, you didn't have to."

Lucius frowned in annoyance. "Yes I did. Sirius threatened me." And with that he left again to St. Mungo's.

Hermione snorted. "Lucius is afraid of the big bad dog." Ginny laughed all the way to the Floo Room.

At St. Mungo's the group was shown to Harry and Draco's private room. Amortia Bluemoon was there, talking quietly to Sirius, Severus, and Lucius when the younger generation walked in. They paused to listen to the Healer before going to the beds.

"They'll both be fine by morning. Draco was able to heal most of the extensive damage, but the pain he gained from that and the energy he had to use to heal has taken its toll. And they will both have severe headaches when they wake. But they will wake, so don't you worry about that." She smiled kindly around the room, and then took her leave to check on her regular patients.

"It's still hard for me to believe she's has the Dark Mark," Hermione said.

"She's a Healer, for Merlin's sake!" Ginny exclaimed. "She saves lives not the other way around. Why did she choose to be a Death Eater? She hasn't murdered anyone, has she?" Severus and Lucius refused to answer. "She couldn't have!"

"I assure you, she has," Severus finally said.
"So the whole cheerful, I'm the nicest person on earth attitude is just a ruse then?"

"No, Amortia really is like that," Lucius said.

"Yes, she can be so nice that it sickens me," Severus drawled.

"That doesn't make sense! How can she be so nice and still follow Voldemort?" Hermione asked Severus. He only shrugged, earning himself a glare from the witch. If she knew what that look did to him, Hermione would probably turn tail and run for the hills. As it was, Hermione had no clue that every time she treated him like a man instead of a teacher he wanted to bend her over any available flat surface and make her scream his name. His recent thoughts were starting to worry him.

"She has never murdered an innocent, if that makes you feel any better," Lucius supplied.

"Maybe a little," Hermione murmured.

The teens converged in on Draco and Harry's beds. Blaise began to push the beds together and the girls joined in to help. Once that was done, Blaise then transfigured both beds into one; blanket and sheets included, and only looked up when he was done. Severus was glaring at him.

"Sir?"

"What do you think you're doing?"

"Relax, Professor. They're not about to shag while asleep, are they?"

"Yeah, and besides… they sleep better together," Ginny said while helping Blaise gently move the boys to the center of the bed. Harry and Draco were supposed to be unconscious but once they were brought within reaching distance, they curled in together; wrapping arms and legs together before falling back into a motionless sleep.

Blaise and Ginny sat on Draco's side while Pansy took a seat beside Harry; Hermione climbed up at the foot of the bed, sitting Indian style and watching her boys sleep.

"He's alright, I suppose," Pansy said, looking at Harry. "Always has been. The Gryffindor hero image does work for him—don't tell anyone I said that." Hermione smiled at her new friend, glad to see Pansy was going to give Harry a chance.

"So, about the party… whom do we send invitations to?" Ginny asked, and the four began making plans for the next day, wanting it to be the best birthday Harry had ever had.

Severus, Lucius, and Sirius stood at the back of the room and watched. "All of them are powerful witches and wizards. I feel sorry for Dumbledore," Lucius said suddenly from beside Sirius. Said Gryffindor hadn't realized Lucius had moved and scowled.

"I don't. That bastard deserves to rot in hell!" he barked, inching his way away. "Were you able to get the memories, Snape? Because of Harry I completely forgot about the reason for you going there and then when Kingsley just let me and Lucius walk away like that, all I could think of was getting the boys help."

"Yes, I have them. I retrieved them right before Moody found me."

"Did you kill Moody?"

"No." Severus sounded depressed about that. "But not from lack of trying. Moody would have
perished if Kingsley hadn't brought him here immediately. He came back and told me he didn't think
Harry would appreciate it if he had to arrest me for the murder of Alastor Moody. He would have
had no choice had Moody died then."

"What is Shacklebolt up to then? He should have arrested us all for trespassing. It would have been
ridiculous, but legal," Lucius said.

Severus shrugged. "At this point, I'm not going to count our blessings."

In the morning, when Severus returned to bring the boys back to Malfoy Manor, he was surprised by
the scene before him. Draco and Harry were still sleeping, wrapped tightly around each other, which
wasn't really surprising, but there were other sleeping bodies surrounding the sleeping mates. Severus
had gone home with a promise to return, and he assumed the teens would have done the same, but it
seems he was mistaken for they were all spread out on the bed.

Zabini and Weasley were curled up together beside Draco, while Parkinson was stretched out next to
Harry, her head lying on Hermione's legs. Hermione had chosen to stretch out at the foot of the bed.
Someone had come in the night and doubled the size of the bed again to fit all six teens and made
sure each of them had a pillow and blanket. Severus was sure it was Bluemoon's doing. Anyone else
would have made them all leave for the night, as per the rules of the hospital, but Bluemoon was an
HIC and she had no problem pulling strings to get what she wanted; one reason why Voldemort had
her recruited.

Severus set down the bundle of clothes he brought for Harry and Draco before silently approaching
the bed; eyes only on the sleeping Gryffindor witch at the end of it. She looked at peace with a small
smile on her face as she hugged her pillow closer to her face. Slowly, Severus reached out a hand to
softly brush his fingers across her chin and along her jaw- his obsidian eyes wide with apprehension.
He felt like he was doing something incredibly wrong- and then Hermione moved so that he was
cupping her cheek and she sighed softly. Severus' breath caught in his throat and he thought he
should pull away, but he couldn't make himself let go. It seemed like the hardest thing to do to stop
touching Hermione; so he didn't. A moment passed before he felt eyes on him. Severus looked to
find Harry staring at him, his head still nestled on Draco's shoulder. There was a small smile on his
face. Severus scowled at him and withdrew his hand.

"It's about time you've woken up!" he snapped.

"Oh yes, because you're so busy standing there staring at my friend…"

"One word about this to anyone, Potter, and I promise you…” Severus shut up when Hermione
turned onto her back and broke out into a full body stretch. Severus backed up and quickly looked
away.

"Er…did we have a sleep over or something, Uncle Sev?” Harry pushed himself up by the elbows,
wincing as the pain in his head made itself known.

"No, you great idiot! You are in St. Mungo's. Moody blasted a wall onto you. Don't you
remember?"

Harry frowned and tried to think back to what he did remember. "I remember going to Godric's
Hollow with you. I remember rushing into the house because you were fighting Moody and I wanted
to make sure you would be alright, and then I was talking to Kingsley…everything is blank after
that." He lowered his head back to his pillow.

"After that was when you were hit with the wall, and I dug you out. Draco, Lucius, and Sirius
arrived soon after, and Draco began to heal you. You…your head was in an awful state, Harry. Draco really shouldn't have tried to heal a wound of that magnitude, but of course he did try. He mostly succeeded before losing consciousness himself due to the pain and lack of energy."

Harry had already tuned Severus out the moment he'd said Draco had been hurt trying to heal him. Harry was running his fingers over Draco's face, through his hair cursing the blond for taking such a risk.

"That better be Harry's hands in my hair or someone is going to die," Draco muttered darkly against Blaise's back, apparently having woken up sometime during Harry and Severus' exchange. It took a moment before Draco realized Harry was on his other side and couldn't possibly be the person whom he had his face pressed uncomfortably against. Raising his head a fraction he caught sight of dark skin and bright red hair. "What the fuck are you doing in my bed, Blaise?" he yelled and then shoved the offending Slytherin off the bed, and in turn Ginny as well.

Draco's outburst and Blaise's loud cursing was an effective way of waking everyone else up, to Severus' amusement. There was a chorus of groans and movement. While the others were waking, Draco turned over and pulled Harry flush against him, burying his face in the crook of Harry's neck and breathed deeply. Knowing Draco was preparing to go back to sleep, Harry shifted under the covers so no one could see him gently cup Draco's morning erection. But he hadn't counted on Draco's reaction and turned beet red in embarrassment when Draco moaned loudly and thrust his hips up to rub against Harry's hand.

Blaise forgot about his anger and started laughing his ass off on the floor while Hermione scrambled off the bed, her face nearly as red as Harry's. Pansy was sitting beside Harry watching the two mates intently with a blank face, though her cheeks had a bit of pink tinge. And Ginny was standing there grinning. Hearing Blaise's laughter, Draco's eyes popped open, and after realizing what he'd done, quickly pulled the sheet over his head.

_I'm going to kill you._ And then he heard someone clear a throat and realized his godfather was also in the room. _Oh yes. You are going to die._

_Not my fault!_

"Hey you two? How do you feel?" Hermione finally asked.

"I'm in the mood to kill. Thanks for asking, Hermione. Now if you would all GET OUT! I would like to get dressed," Draco said from underneath the sheet. Beside him, Harry's embarrassment dissolved into amusement but he knew better than to laugh outright at Draco.

Severus dropped their clothes on the bed with a sneer before leaving the room with everyone else. As soon as the door was shut, Draco jumped Harry.

"I'm sorry!" Harry yelled between his laughter. "Draco, stop! I said I'm sorry!" Harry was being tickled in places he didn't know were ticklish, and Draco was taking no prisoners.

"I can't believe you did that."

"I didn't want you to go back to sleep."

Draco ceased his tickling and sat back on Harry's thighs. "And molesting me was your best option?"

"Molesting? Draco, it's not molestation if you liked it, which you clearly did." Harry grinned against his better judgment. "Everyone heard how much you liked it."
"That's it!" Draco dove forward to commence his tickle attack, but Harry jerked his hips, knocking Draco off, and he lurched out of bed; grabbing his clothes, Harry then ran for the bathroom, locking the door just as Draco reached it. "I swear on everything I own and as a Malfoy, I will get you back when you least expect it, and in the worst possible place or situation. And in the mean time, I will take out some of my revenge on you right now." He started banging on the door. "You have to come out of there sometime, Harry!"

"No I don't. Remember? We can Apparate anywhere."

"Harry, no!" Draco said quickly, the pounding on the door intensified. "You were hurt badly yesterday! You don't know what will happen!"

Harry heard the fear in Draco's voice and opened the door. "I'm not going to Apparate. Don't worry."

Draco touched Harry's forehead and his hand started trembling again. Harry felt what Draco had felt when he saw Harry bleeding on the floor. "It was...really bad. You were hurt so badly, Harry..."

"Hey..." Harry pulled Draco into his arms and the blond buried his nose in his hair. Harry rubbed Draco's back soothingly and spoke in a soft tone. "It's okay now. You once promised to never leave me. Now I'm promising. You'll never get rid of me, Draco Malfoy."

"That's good then." They kissed and would have let it go on if Harry hadn't remembered Severus. He pulled back and grinned when Draco tried to follow.

"No. You know what happens when we forget who's around." He pushed Draco out of the bathroom. "Go get dressed. You know Severus will be barging in soon."

It was only because Harry was right that Draco nodded and went back to the bed for his robes. Harry remained in the bathroom to change but kept the door open, which was done on purpose. Harry had every intention of watching Draco undress out of the hospital garb and into his robes, and Draco had similar thoughts, and neither of them planned on making it a secret that they were looking. So by the time they were dressed, both of them realized it was a mistake, because now they had to walk around with uncomfortable erections in their pants.

"Oh, good. I was afraid Severus had taken you before I could give you this." Healer Bluemoon entered, and like Harry remembered before, a silver tray hovered behind her with four potion vials. "Here you are." She handed two to each wizard. "Drink up. There is a potion to regain your strength and a potion for the headaches."

"Thank Merlin!" Harry and Draco drank down their potions without another word, and sighed in relief when the headaches started to retreat.

"Thanks, Healer Bluemoon." Harry handed back the empty vials.

"Please, call me Amortia."

Harry grinned. "Sure."

"You should probably call him Harry as I'm sure you'll be seeing a lot of him, if his record is anything to go by."

Amortia laughed softly. "Yes, I can see that being true."

"Hey!"
"You do have a knack for getting injured," Draco soothed.

"It's not my fault!"

"Okay, Harry."

"I'll see you tonight, then," Amortia said for goodbye. Harry and Draco shared a confused look. "It's Harry's Inheritance and the transformations. You didn't think you were going to be left alone for that, did you?"

"I bloody well did!" Draco cried. "I don't want anyone in the room when we change. There's nothing you can do for the pain anyway. Nothing ever works for Inheritance."

"I know that, Draco. But I will be outside at midnight and I will wait until it has ended. Then I shall attend to you. I hope that is not a problem..." She tilted her head and smiled at him, a dimple appearing at her cheek. "Because that is the way it's going to be."

"Y-yeah, alright." It was then Draco understood how Amortia Bluemoon could actually be a Death Eater. She said it in the nicest way possible, her tone light and friendly; even her eyes were smiling. But under it all was a current running from the woman to Draco, and he got the clear impression something bad would happen if he argued further. It was a brilliant ability and his respect for the Healer skyrocketed. Beside him, Harry was nodding his head in agreement with the Healer and he was in agreement with Draco's thoughts as well.

Harry wanted to see the Pensieve memories the moment they returned to the manor, but Draco convinced Harry to wait until the next day. Hermione told Draco about the party while Harry had been at Godric's Hollow. It was a good idea. Who knew what they were about to go through and he didn't want those memories on his mind on top of everything else. Somehow he was able to get those feelings across to Harry without actually letting on about the party. And to distract both of them from thinking about the memories or about what was going to happen at midnight, Draco dragged Harry out to the Quidditch pitch for a Seekers game. It didn't really take much to persuade Harry and they spent most of the morning outside in the air.

Meanwhile, within the manor, Hermione had made a beeline to the library the moment they returned and she went in search of the Ukatae. She hoped it was something to help with her search for magical creatures because frankly, she was stumped. She had no clue what they could be turning into. All the traits they were displaying didn't match any of the creatures she'd come across, even if she mixed and matched creatures.

Hermione used the point me spell to locate a book on the Ukatae because she was certain she had not come across that name in any of the books she'd read so far, and she thought she had all the books having to do with anything concerning magical creatures. Maybe it didn't have anything to do with Harry and Draco's bond, because the spell pointed her in a completely different direction then where she had been looking; in fact it led her into another part of the library she didn't know existed.

At first she thought the spell was wrong because it led her to a wall, but then she spotted the thin line running up it, and tracing the line with her eyes she saw it was a door. She pressed against it and it easily opened revealing a small book chamber. She didn't have to be the top student to know she was in the Dark Arts book chamber. Hermione found the book and looked at it.

"Ancient Races." Hermione sat down and promptly located the information she needed. It was the first half of the book. She began to read about the Ukatae and as she read on her eyes became the size of saucers. She'd only gotten to the second chapter before she snapped the book closed and
rushed out to find Draco and Harry. She searched around the manor before she ran into Blaise, Ginny, and Pansy.

"They're flying. We were just going out to the pitch." Hermione nodded and followed then, the book clutched firmly under her arm.

"What's wrong, Hermione?" asked Blaise.

"I know what they are. Voldemort helped me."

"And?" All three said.

Hermione shook her head. "They should be the first to know," she said firmly.

"But you and Voldemort know!" Gin ex claimed.

"You know what I mean, Gin. You'll just have to wait."

They sat down on the bleachers and watched the game for a few minutes. Harry and Draco were looking for the Snitch, shouting taunts at each other, showing off, and flying happy and free from everything.

"Do you think they should be flying so soon after what happened yesterday?"

"They're fine, Hermione. Stop worrying."

"We should go to get ready soon," Pansy said, watching Harry shoot off to the opposite direction on his Firebolt, Draco right beside him. Harry turned to him and flashed a grin before shooting straight down, causing Pansy to gasp. A moment later, he swooped back up to the sky with the Snitch caught firmly in his hand. Sirius heard Draco's cursing all the way from where he stood outside at the front of the manor.

After watching another game, this time with Draco winning, Pansy, Blaise, and Gin left to go get ready for the party, and Hermione lingered in the stands hoping Harry and Draco would come down soon so she could talk to them.

"Harry, you bastard! I had that in my hand!" Hermione looked up to see Harry was flying towards her grinning with the Snitch in his hand again. Draco was hovering in the air glaring at him.

"How could you have it in your hand if I've got it now?" Harry called over his shoulder. He pulled up next to Hermione and dismounted. "Hey Hermione."

"Hello, Harry."

"Listen," Harry started as he sat beside her. "I want to tell you something, even though it's against my best judgment and frankly, the thought kind of leaves me sick …"

"Go on already. What do you want to say?"

"He'd kill me if I told you this, but…." Harry's gaze swept the grounds to make sure they wouldn't be overheard. A look above told him Draco was prepared to sulk for a while. Harry grinned.

"What Harry?"

"I think Severus has a thing for you and since I know you have a thing," Harry shuddered, "for him, I thought you'd like to know." As he spoke he had to look away. It was really embarrassing, and
again, he had no idea was he was telling her, because Severus would find out he told somehow and then Harry would be dead and that would be that.

"A thing?" Hermione asked in a peculiar voice. Harry looked at her and she wore a look on her face that he rarely saw. She looked confused.

"Oh, come on, Hermione. You have to know what I'm talking about. A thing! I don't know what to call it. You like him and he seems to like you..."

"Oh."

"Yeah." There was an awkward silence for about a minute before Hermione recovered.

"I've got something to tell you and Draco. Can you get him down?"

"I don't know. He's still pouting. He enjoys it up there." Harry nudged her arm playfully, but stopped joking around when he saw her frown. He told Draco to come down.

When she had both of their attentions, she brought out the book. "I found out what you are." She had two blank faces staring at her. She raised her eyebrows expectantly. "Do you want to know?"

Harry looked at Draco and raised an eyebrow. Draco looked off to the side, his eyes narrowed in thought. "All I want to know is do we become some horrid creatures?"

"Well no, not really. In fact I believe your outward appearance will not change much. You are Dark creatures, however."

"That explains so much," Harry replied. "Concerning the feel of my magic anyway. Dark creature. That would explain it."

Looking over, Draco nodded in agreement before turning back to Hermione. "Okay. I don't want to know any more until tomorrow. As long as I still have my hair I'm fine." He touched his hair to make sure it was still there.

Harry rolled his eyes."Yeah, Hermione. I'm fine with waiting. It's tonight after all."

"Okay, then. I must be off now." She needed to get to her parents house and find the clothes she was thinking of wearing tonight.

"Hold on," Harry said. "We haven't really hung out that much, Mione." Hermione tried not to look guilty. She really didn't want to lie to Harry, but she also didn't want to give away the surprise. She was very grateful when Draco came to the rescue.

"It's okay, Hermione. You go on. We have somewhere to go anyway."

"We do?" Draco nodded and grinned.

It turns out that somewhere happened to be a very high scale muggle shopping center in the middle of London to which they had to walk to from the Leaky Cauldron. Harry looked at Draco incredulously.

"Blaise was the one to bring me here the summer after our fourth year."

"I thought you didn't like muggle clothing." Harry followed Draco into a store that sold semi-formal and formal clothing. He looked around and admitted he liked a lot of the things he was seeing. But he didn't understand why they were there.
Draco headed for the back of the store where there was a section of black pants. "I never said that. I only poor muggle clothing I don't like."

"Doesn't that seem hypocritical to you? We complain about muggles bringing their ways here, shouldn't that include clothes too?"

"Certainly not if it's good clothes. And besides, wizards and muggle share certain industries such as entertainment; because we are still humans and still need to be entertained. You follow me?" Harry nodded. "And these clothes are far more sensible then wearing robes sometimes."

It still seemed a little hypocritical to Harry, but at the same time he understood and agreed to what Draco said, so Harry pushed the rest of his arguments to the back of his mind and watched Draco search out pants. Upon further inspection, Harry was horrified to find they were leather, and Draco started rummaging through the rack muttering about finding just the right size for the stupid Gryffindor.

"I'm not about to wear some tight arse muggle leather pants, Draco!"

"I promise you'll look lovely and I'll love them on you." Draco gave Harry the once over and winked, then went back to finding more than one pair of leather pants. Harry stood there and blushed. Okay, maybe he would just try the pants on, for Draco's sake. Didn't mean he had to take them home.

In the end, not only did they walk away from that store with three good-sized bags, but also an additional five bags from three other stores they visited.

"No more! I'm begging you!" Harry panted as they walked into an alleyway to shrink the bags to be able to fit in their pockets.

"You did grand. And you made me happy by letting me buy you all this stuff."

"Unfortunately your happiness means a lot to me," Harry replied and was rewarded with a smile.

"Good, I'll use that to my advantage from now on."

"Why are we even buying this stuff though? Are we ever going to need it?"

"Don't worry, you'll need it. There's still a lot of stuff about Slytherins that you don't know about."

Harry didn't ask Draco to elaborate, because he knew eventually all would be explained. All he wanted to do now was go home and eat and then maybe take a nap because he knew he wasn't going to sleep at all tonight. He looked at Draco, who happened to be dressed all in black. He was sort of standing in the shadows, but his pale blond hair stood out as if the sun was shining directly on his head. He looked good enough to eat. Draco started smirking and Harry licked his dry lips. Maybe after his nap he might try seducing Draco. He was tired as hell of waiting for the blond to make the move.

Harry was satisfied. The rest of his day was mapped out.

"Let's Apparate. I don't want to walk back to the Leaky."

Draco moved closer and studied Harry. "You tired?"

Harry resisted rolling his eyes. Why did everyone treat him like he was about to break all the time?
Don't get an attitude over it. It was just a question.

"Fine. All right. Yes, I'm tired. Can we go now?"

"Yes. But I'll do it." Harry nodded and stepped into Draco and wrapped his arms around his back.

"Mind your hands, Draco!" Harry's yell was drowned out by the pop of Apparition and Draco's deep chuckle in his ear.

If Harry thought he was actually going to get some rest when he got home, he was sadly mistaken. The moment they were inside the manor, Draco ordered a house elf to bring an early dinner to his room. And then he forced Harry into trying on three outfits before allowing him to eat. Harry did it because he didn't feel like arguing and he wanted food already. Finally, when Harry finished trying on all three outfits, Draco allowed him dinner, and went to put the rest of the outfits away. Draco did not trust Harry to treat his clothes with the proper amount of care.

Harry was busy eating at the desk, but stopped to look when Draco came back with one of the outfits. "Put this on. We're going out in an hour." Harry stared at the clothes dumbly for a second.

"Hold on! Where are we going? Draco?" but the blond had already left the room. Harry grumbled incoherently before returning to his dinner.
"What time is it?"

"Half past eight."

"When are they going to get here?" Ginny asked. "We don't have much time before midnight."

"There's loads of time," Hermione said. "Everyone is already here, so we'll be going as soon as Harry and Draco arrive."

"Can you believe they all came? I wasn't sure some of them would. After what Ron's been saying, and everything that's been in the Prophet…"

Hermione nodded and smiled at the group of friends waiting for the birthday boy. Nearly everyone she sent invites to had shown up. Dean and Neville had come, which would make Harry very happy, as he'd always liked those two. Lavender Brown came and Hermione wasn't sure she actually wanted that blonde haired tart at the party. She was sure Lavender was only here to get more gossip info, and the same went for Parvati Patil. Though, now that she thought about it, she could probably use this to Draco and Harry's advantage. She would think about it before deciding.

"Harry has more loyal friends then your brother thought, Miss Weasley," Severus said from behind them, scanning the crowd hanging about in his home, trying very hard to ignore the small black so called dress Hermione thought appropriate to wear. Though looking around, he noticed she was wearing something similar to what all the witches were wearing.

Severus tried to fight off a scowl and failed miserably. Did she feel the need to follow after her peers and show off her legs to the world? As if he didn't already have too much to worry about. At least he'd had several shots of Firewhiskey to get through the night and planned to have at least one more before midnight rolled around. It was probably a mistake and Severus was sure he'd regret it come morning. Still, he felt he deserved several drinks after stumbling through the last couple of weeks. Change was inevitable. But he wasn't used to so much change in so little time.

"Draco will be happy someone is here to represent every Hogwarts House," Hermione spoke, breaking into his thoughts. She kept her gaze firmly away from him. Ginny was the only one to turn and look at him.

"What are you doing here, Professor? You aren't going with us are you?" She couldn't possibly imagine Snape at a dance club. And dammit! There were supposed to be no adults tonight!

"Did you honestly think we'd let Harry and Draco go out without protection? Dumbledore still intends to lock them away."

"It's a good idea to have extra reinforcements." Hermione mentioned.

"But Hermione. Everyone here knows how to defend themselves…"
"It's still a good idea to have older more experienced adults around as well," Hermione replied logically before walking away to join Neville, Dean, Luna, and Colin.

"What's wrong with her?" Ginny wondered to herself. "Professor, how do we know… when they'll get here?" Ginny turned back to Professor Snape, but he had already disappeared.

She shrugged and went to join her friends. Ernie MacMillan, Lavender, and the Patil twins were also joining the group and they all began talking about what they'd done over the summer. No one seemed to want to talk about Harry and Draco yet. Likely they wanted to see with their own eyes if what was being said and printed in the Manifest Metamorphic was true.

Ginny looked at the other groups and cataloged who was from which house. The Gryffindors and Slytherins made up the majority of the party group, while there were only two Ravenclaws and four Hufflepuffs. The group she was currently standing with consisted of Neville, Dean, Colin, Hermione, Lavender, Parvati, and herself; all Gryffindors of course. Ernie was a Hufflepuff, and the Ravenclaws were Luna and Padma.

Fred and George were off on the other side of the room, surrounded by their group as they demonstrated a new spell they invented which widens the target's eyes to the size of saucers and temporarily allows you to see things as you would when looking through a telescope. Angelina Johnson had her eyes tightly shut and was yelling at Fred to end the spell. Lee Jordan was bent over, his arm slung over George's shoulders and both were laughing. Ginny was startled when she saw Zacharias Smith among that group, standing slightly apart and watching the scene with indifference. He, just like Susan Bones and Hannah Abbot, was a Hufflepuff. Ginny wondered who invited Smith, and even more, she wondered why he accepted the invite. Smith had never really gotten along with anyone, especially Harry. She decided she'd keep an eye on him as well.

The Slytherins all stayed in one group and Ginny was sure they were there for Draco's support. Well that wasn't true. Blaise and Pansy were here for Harry as well, but Crabbe and Goyle were definitely not here for Harry and neither was Millicent Bulstrode. And being one to listen to rumors, and then go and finding out whether it was true or not, Ginny knew that Theodore Nott was definitely not here for Harry, as Mr. Nott was Draco's ex lover and he didn't look at all happy with the situation. Ginny excused herself from her group and headed over to the Slytherins and was happily greeted by Blaise and Pansy. Nott completely ignored Ginny, while Millicent watched her approach with narrowed suspicious eyes. Crabbe and Goyle, on the other hand, merely stared blankly at her. That is, until Blaise nudged Crabbe and then shook his head and looked pointedly at Ginny.

"Oh right. I forgot."

"Yes, we know how much you love to remain in character, Vince," Pansy said.

"It's peaceful there. Vincent Crabbe," the big Slytherin stuck his hand out to her. Now Ginny was the one staring dumbly at Crabbe. "Don't worry, I'm not going to bite."

"Wasn't worried that you were." She took Crabbe's hand. And then a surprised look crossed her face. "I can't believe I never figured it out before! You two aren't stupid at all. I knew there had to be a better reason you were in Slytherin and not just because you're pureblooded jerks."

"We like keeping secrets," Goyle said as he stuck out his hand.

"You keep them well. Usually no one can keep secrets from me." Ginny took Goyle's hand too and smiled at him. He blushed and smiled back. "Oh, look. He's cute too when he smiles!"

"Hey now…" Blaise playfully pushed Greg away. "None of that around the Luscious Red." He bent
to whisper in her ear, "it's his secret weapon." Beside them, Nott snorted disdainfully. Blaise looked up and his eyes hardened. "Theo, we invited you here to have a good time, not to spoil ours. I know why you're really here and you should forget it. It's over. Nothing is ever going to change that now. You knew when you started seeing Draco he was already thinking of someone else. I warned you at the beginning."

"It's none of her business, Zabini!" Theo spat.

"It is my business, Nott." Ginny said, taking a step closer to him. "If you're planning anything that may end up hurting Harry then it is very much my business. If that's the case you can give up now. There's a whole room of people here who wouldn't mind seeing the back of your arse if you put so much as one toe out of line. Got it?"

"Theo, do us all a favor. Relax or go home," Pansy said, giving him a little pat on the shoulder. "We're all going to be friends here or Draco will not be happy. Understand? You're still friends, after all."

Nott's eyes narrowed, but he did nod. "Yeah, I got it."

"Good!"

"Draco's bringing Harry now, everybody!" Sirius yelled as he ran in.

"Let's take our places then, shall we?" Hermione said walking up. Every one gathered together, sort of away from the door. The Slytherins, Ginny, and Hermione stood a little apart from the rest, as neither group knew how to approach the other. Fred and George flicked out the lights when everyone was in position. Severus sighed in the dark and rolled his eyes. He doubted Draco had been able to keep the party a secret from Harry.

Harry wanted to know what was going on. Draco had disappeared and left Harry to his dinner, and when Harry was done, he'd showered then put on the clothes Draco had chosen. When almost two hours passed and Draco hadn't come back, Harry decided he'd had enough of waiting and set out to find his mate.

On his way out, Harry caught sight of his reflection as he passed a full-length mirror on the wall and stopped to study himself. Partly because after tonight he may never look like this again and he wanted to at least be able to remember what he looked like. And the other part was because he looked good. He couldn't ever remember looking this good. Draco really did have good taste.

Harry was dressed in an emerald green long sleeved silk shirt left unbuttoned, with a plain black t-shirt underneath that. And then he'd squeezed himself into the leather pants Draco left out. Harry lasted one minute before shaking his head and choosing another pair of pants that didn't cut the circulation off of his crotch. He figured Draco would understand. So now he was in pants that weren't exactly tight, but hugged him in all the right places. And now that his hair was longer, it wasn't as wild as before; not that it was completely tame now, because it wasn't. But there was a sexy look about his hair now that spoke of brooding nights along a windy moor. Plus his eyes were bigger and clearer without his glasses and he had to admit they were pretty but maybe just a bit too girly for his liking, as were his long black eyelashes.

"You changed the pants," Draco said, coming up behind Harry.

"Yeah. Too tight." Harry looked into the eyes of Draco's reflection and smiled. Draco looked down and nodded, the light in his eyes becoming brighter.
"These are good." Draco licked his lips and stepped closer.

"Watch your hands," Harry muttered when he spotted Draco's hands inching towards his hips. He slid away and headed for the door.

"Come on, Harry!" he whined. "What's the deal? You haven't let me touch you since this morning."

Harry hid his grin and pretended like he hadn't heard Draco. But he did know how bothered Draco was by his actions since normally he couldn't go ten minutes without touching Harry's skin. And Harry was counting on Draco being fully worked up by the end of the night. "Why are you late, anyway? I thought we were going somewhere?"

"I was talking to Sirius and I had to get this." Draco withdrew something from his charcoal gray slacks and held it out for Harry to see. "It's the Malfoy crest." Harry fingered the silver necklace with the small crest pendant, staring at the silver M against a black onyx background.

"Why do you have this?"

"It's for you." Draco took the necklace back and put it around Harry's neck. The moment it was clasped, the necklace misted and disappeared into Harry's skin.

"Thanks, I think. I assume it was supposed to disappear?"

"Yes, I'll tell you about it later. We should go now." Draco took Harry's hand and they walked to the Floo Room. "We're going to Uncle Sev's first. I need to pick something up."

They Flooed to Snape Manor and Harry was wondering what they were there to get, but Draco wasn't talking, verbally or mentally. He had his mind so tightly shut that Harry was beginning to be disturbed by it.

"Draco, what's going on?"

Draco took Harry's hand again to reassure him and rubbed his thumb over Harry's knuckle, but otherwise stayed silent, which only further irritated Harry. And then he caught sight of Draco's sly grin, and his irritation skyrocketed. Harry silently boiled as Draco led him down a corridor, and he was seriously thinking about letting go of Draco's hand, maybe….

"It's in here." They stopped at a door, and Draco pushed it opened.

"But this is a meeting room-" Draco pushed Harry through the doorway.

"Just get in the room you paranoid idiot." The room was pitch-black; only Draco could still see where everyone was due to his nocturnal vision and he realized that if he could see, maybe Harry had that sight as well, even if his vision wasn't that great.

"This room is completely dark, Draco. What are we-"

"SURPRISE!"

Several things happened at once. The lights went on with a burst of sparks from some of Fred and George's fireworks, which elicited several screams from the people standing near where they went off. Harry had whipped out his wand and retreated five steps back before realizing what was happening, and then he froze in embarrassment. And Severus started flowing around the room trying to put out the little fires the Weasley fireworks had started. The Weasley twins had disappeared.
Draco rushed to block everyone's view of Harry, wrapped him in more reassurance, and tucked Harry's wand away. Hermione, Blaise, Ginny, and Pansy rushed to the front in the guise they were congratulating him, but they really wanted to make sure he wasn't upset.

"Wow, guys. I don't know what to say..." Once Harry calmed down, he was actually delighted.

"Happy Birthday, Harry," said Hermione and hugged him. Ginny did the same, as did Pansy.

"This is great, thanks everyone." Everyone started crowding around, and Harry was very happy to see some of them. "Neville! Dean!" He made his way to them, and was greeted with a hug from each of his dorm mates.

"Hey Harry. Didn't think you'd be seeing me, did you?" Dean asked.

"Not really. Not with what's been going on and what Ron's been saying."

"I never listened to him about you," Neville said with a shrug and a smile.

"I stopped listening to Ron when I started getting secret messages from Ginny at the beginning of summer," Dean said, and Harry looked over to flash Ginny a grin.

"Have you been reading the Daily Prophet? I can't believe I'm going to say this, but most of that's true, you know?" Harry wanted to make sure they knew what he was in to before everything went back to normal with them.

"We know you, Harry. We know you don't do things or believe things without proper reason. We get weekly updates from Ginny about stuff like that, because I'm in the Muggle world during hols and Neville here is always cooped up by his gran."

"Yeah, that's true," Neville agreed in a gloomy voice while sullenly nodding his head.

"And we're not going to judge you by someone else's words," Dean finished and flashed Harry a grin.

"Oi, Harry! Happy birthday, mate!" George said, coming over and patting Harry heavily on the shoulder.

"Thanks."

"Harry, I have to say you look good enough to eat. You don't think Draco would mind if I steal you for a dance tonight, do you?" Fred asked seriously and Harry blushed.

"What do you mean dance?" he asked.

"You don't think you got dressed up just for us, did you?"

"I don't know anything. I've just been following Draco all day."

"We're taking you to a dance club. I know you've never been," Draco said as he came up from behind and slipped an arm over Harry's shoulder.

"It's a nice place, Harry. You'll like it," George said.

Draco nodded at Harry and then turned to Fred. "And no Weasley, you can't have him for a dance. He's going to be mine all night. Got that?"
"Draco must be in heat," George whispered to Fred who nodded in agreement. Harry snickered while Draco sneered at them.

"We'll see everyone at the club." And with that Draco Apparated with Harry to the Wizard's Den. Once they landed in a room similar to the one in the restaurant in Paris, a man in all black approached them.

"Mr. Malfoy, lovely to see you again."

"Yes, I'm sure it is." Draco gave the wizard a haughty smirk. "You know who this is, Rojer?" Draco laid a hand on Harry's arm. "You'll be seeing Harry and his friends here more often."

"Yes, Mr. Malfoy. Nice to meet you, Mr. Potter."

"Call me Harry," He said and shook Rojer's hand.

"Yes, sir."

Harry rolled his eyes and walked into the main floor of the club and hovered just inside, waiting for Draco to finish making sure his every instruction had been seen to. Merlin, Draco. Why didn't you just rent the place for the night?

Because it's not fun when there aren't enough bodies on the dance floor.

Harry shrugged and walked to the bar, and was completely aware of the stares coming his way. And these weren't speculative gazes, but physical appraisals, and he felt a smirk form on his face.

"What can I get for you, Mr. Potter?"

Harry looked up and realized he'd reached the bar, where a man who looked only a few years older than Harry was standing behind it. "Oh, um…"

"Anything you want. Everything is on the house tonight."

"Thanks. I guess just give me something strong, surprise me."

The bartender grinned and went on to mix Harry a drink. "My name's Dirk. I own the club."

"It's really nice. I'm actually surprised to see a Wizarding club. I didn't know there was one."

"Yeah, I opened it two years ago. Draco's been coming here since then with the rest of his Slytherins. I guess it passed the pureblood standards." That made sense, Harry thought as he looked around. The club looked more wizard than muggle. All the lights were done by magic, moving around the club creating dazzling shapes and light shows, and all the tables and chairs were carved from wood. The entire club looked like it was carved out the side of a mountain, giving someone the feeling they were dancing in a cave.

Harry turned back to watch his drink being made. Dirk flicked his wand and different shots poured themselves into a silver container. He put the ice in the container himself, then covered it and began shaking.

"Why don't you use your wand to make the entire drink?" Harry wondered.

Dirk shrugged. "I like giving a drink my personal touch and using my wand all night would just get boring." Harry nodded. That made sense. "If you don't mind me asking, is the Prophet reporting correctly? Are you and Draco together now?"
Harry nodded and watched him pour a bright lime green drink into a martini glass. When Harry nodded, Dirk started to chuckle. "Thank Merlin for that." He slid the glass to Harry.

"Why's that?" Harry took a tentative sip, and his mouth nearly burst in explosive flavor and then he felt the burning of the alcohol as it slid down his throat. Harry thought he'd be having a lot of … "what's the name of this?"

"It's an Avada Kedavra. Have enough of them, it'll kill you." Dirk flashed him a grin and then went on to explain why he was happy to hear Harry and Draco were together.

"I won't have to comfort the guy anymore when the they come to party and he gets trashed. Every time he gets drunk, he's over here talking to me about you. About your fights and how he hated them, and about how you hated him as well. I probably shouldn't be telling you this. Who am I to get in your business but Draco's really sensitive when it comes to you and if you didn't know it yet, I thought you should."

"You know him pretty well then?" Harry asked, his eyes narrowed and darkened on the owner. Dirk raised an eyebrow when he caught the dark look on Harry's face, and then he smirked.

"Not like that. And I can see I didn't need to explain anything to you."

Harry nodded and turned to look over his shoulder. He saw some of his friends coming through the door. Draco was there talking to his father. Whoa, and Lucius was dressed to kill! Were those white leather pants he was wearing? And he looked hot for an older guy. He was Draco's father after all. But Draco was by far the best looking bloke in the club and was the only one who could keep Harry's attention for longer than a few seconds of observation.

In fact, Harry had to laugh at himself because he couldn't seem to look anywhere else but at Draco. The different colored lights flicking to the music throughout the loud thrumming club painted Draco's pale hair like a rainbow and Harry could clearly see his silver eyes gleaming with excitement at the prospect of the fun they would have the coming night. He wore a black silk shirt with silver dragons embroidered on each side of his chest; he'd left the top four buttons undone, revealing a tantalizing glimpse of the pale flesh beneath. The shirt was very tight, hugging Draco's broad shoulders and toned chest, and when he turned, Harry could see the hard six-pack that made up Draco's abs. His pants were the same color as the dragons and his eyes.

Draco was dressed to kill, from his hair all the way down to his dragon hide boots. He looked over to Harry and smiled before turning back to his father.

Harry downed his drink, and figured he'd need another for what he was about to do.

"Can I have another?"

"Course you can, Mr. Potter."

"Call me Harry."

"Right then, Harry. I should warn you, this drink really doesn't kill, but after this, you'll be feeling a little light. I'd drink something else after this one."

"Thanks for the warning."

Sirius came up and gave Harry a one armed hug. "A double shot of Firewhiskey!" he barked.

"What's wrong, Padfoot?"
"Just look at him, the blond devil!" Sirius watched Dirk pour Harry's drink into a glass and pass it to his godson. "Harry, beware of that drink." Sirius spoke gravely and stared at the offending drink as if it were a bloodthirsty demon.

"You've had experience?" Harry chuckled.

"I've warned him," Dirk said to Sirius, and proceeded to pour his drink. Sirius nodded at him.

"What blond devil?" Harry asked innocently and sipped his drink to hide his grin. Sirius turned dark eyes on him.

"You know damn well who I'm talking about. What does he think he's doing dressed like that?"

"I guess he's just trying to fit in. Wouldn't want to embarrass his son, now would he?"

Sirius snarled before downing his drink and demanding another. "He could have done it without dressing like that. For Merlin's sake, even the younger wizards here are looking at him!"

Harry looked around and noticed that indeed both Malfoy's had half the club looking at them, and some witches and wizards were moving towards them.

"You're dressed almost just like him, Sirius."

"I didn't dress like this to be sexy!"

"You are sexy though," Dirk replied helpfully and flashed Sirius a grin. This seemed to lighten Sirius' mood a little and he perked up straight in his seat, blatantly staring Dirk up and down.

Harry stood from his stool and grabbed his drink. "I'm sure Dirk would love to hear all about your complaints about Lucius Malfoy. I'll leave you two to it, shall I?" Harry flashed Dirk a grin, which reminded the bartender of Draco.

"Thanks Harry. I appreciate it," Dirk replied sarcastically. Harry gave him a wave, and headed to the two aforementioned blonds' and hissed at one particular club patron who was giving Draco's bum a thorough visual inspection.

"I thought you were trying to play down the fact you're happy about being single again. Dressing like this isn't going to convince anyone," he said to Lucius as he walked up.

"I've been here before, Harry. It's not a surprise to some to see me dressed this way."

"What's wrong with Sirius?" Draco asked. He slipped his arm around Harry's waist and lower, hugging the shorter boy to his side and planting a firm hand over Harry's very delicious arse in an obvious possessive move, breaking the hearts of many who were watching both boys from afar.

"Oh, something or other," Harry answered a little breathlessly. "But that wizard, Dirk, started flirting with Sirius, so now he's perfectly fine and I figure Sirius will be happy to flirt back." At the end he peeked at Lucius from under his heavy eyelashes.

It worked. Lucius gazed snapped over to the bar where Sirius was explaining something in obvious agitation, waving his arms in the air, while Dirk, who did seem to be interested, was leaning against the bar in apparent fascination. Lucius' eye began to twitch.

"He's half his age!" Lucius hissed, and began fingering the snakehead on his cane, probably thinking about pulling out the wand he had hidden within.
"Come on, Harry. Everyone's already waiting for you upstairs." Draco began to lead Harry to the stairs. As they passed a table, Harry downed the rest of his drink then set his empty glass down, and followed Draco. Harry saw the entire upper floor had been closed off for their use only, and Draco was pulling him to a large table where most of their friends were sitting with a round of drinks already passed around and two opened bottles of Firewhiskey sitting in the center. Just before they reached the table, Harry pulled Draco aside and pressed his lips against the blonds.

"Draco…" he made sure their eyes were locked, and that Draco could feel every single little thing Harry was feeling. The Slytherin's eyes went wide. "I love you."

Harry grinned then and left Draco standing in delicious shock. Harry rounded the table and sat between Hermione and Luna and grabbed an unopened bottle of butterbeer.

"Hey, Luna. You look great," he told the Ravenclaw, happy to see her again. He was really very fond of Luna. Everyone thought she was weird, and she was, to tell the truth, but she was also a good friend, loyal, and she was smarter than everyone gave her credit for. There's a reason why she's a Ravenclaw. People were always forgetting this about Luna, but Harry never would.

"Thank you, Harry," she replied mistily. "I made a great trade with a Snigglehoop Fairiethistle. They really know how to bring the best out of people."

"Yes, I'm sure they do," Harry replied with a fond smile.

"Harry, what did you do to Draco?" Hermione said from beside him. Harry looked up and watched in amusement as Draco finally started moving again; his eyes slightly glazed, and he was barely able to make it into a seat beside Blaise without falling over.

"I finally told him that I love him," Harry whispered to her.

"Oh." Hermione studied Draco for a minute. "Well you certainly surprised him. Though I don't know why. He should have known. Everyone else did."

"He did know but it's different when it is said face to face and he wasn't expecting to hear it from me so soon."

"He seems happy enough. Actually, I've never seen Draco look so expressive."

Harry nodded and smiled. It was funny the way he and Draco were remaining silent from the bond. It was making things more intense because they were only communicating by sight. The more apart they stayed for the duration of the night, the better it would be when one of them decided enough was enough. And Harry had a feeling Draco was going to break first and soon. He was starting to look angry over the fact that there was half a table between them.

"Ah, love…" Luna sighed, and rubbed her cheek against Harry's shoulder. "Everyone should have love. Everyone."

"I am in complete agreement," Harry said before kissing her hair.

"All right, everyone. Is this not a party? Didn't we come here to have some fun?" Fred demanded.

"Everyone start drinking!" George shouted. "And let the fun begin!" He, Fred, and Lee Jordan clinked their glasses together, saluted Harry, and then downed their shots.

"Shots for everyone!" They yelled after slamming their shot glasses down.
Draco shifted uncomfortably in his seat and downed the shot Theo Nott handed him. He didn't catch the look Nott was giving him. Harry did and it kind of made the Gryffindor feel sorry for the guy. Draco explained about their past relationship, and Harry knew it ended for Draco a long time ago. Harry could see Nott still had feelings for Draco and he knew Draco wouldn't ever look at Nott that way again. It was easy to feel sorry for Nott because of that.

A few rounds of Firewhiskey later, mouths were exceedingly more lose and the groups began mingling together. The first person to want to dance was Pansy who then, to everyone's surprise, grabbed Dean and Neville by the arms and dragged them down the stairs to the dance floor. Everyone watched them go for a minute, shook their heads at the incredulity of it, before going down to join.

It was still Harry's intention to keep Draco fired up the entire night by refusing to let him grope him, so he immediately latched onto Luna and felt Draco pelting his anger at him like Bludgers. Draco didn't want to dance with anyone but Harry, but since his mate made himself unavailable and thereby leaving Draco to look like an idiot standing in the middle of the dance floor alone, he grabbed a random person and started dancing.

Harry was supposed to be dancing with Luna, but she wasn't paying attention to him and seemed to be dancing to her own music. Harry took this opportunity to face Draco while he danced to a song made for rocking hips and he began to slide his hands over his body as he danced, watching Draco closely behind heavy eyelashes.

Draco, for his part, was seething, and wasn't paying any bit of attention to the partner he'd chosen. In fact, he hadn't even looked to see who it was. But Harry was staring at his partner now and it was obvious he was trying to keep from laughing. Draco stilled and looked down into the horrified eyes of Neville Longbottom.

"What the hell Longbottom? Where did you come from?"

"I was dancing with Pansy, until you pulled me away."

"Well go back to her! I don't want to dance with you." Draco shoved Neville away, who happily disappeared into the dancing crowd.

_What's the matter, love? You look a little pink. What's got you so hot?_ Harry's hand passed over his crotch, and he made sure Draco could feel Harry's pleasure building. Draco's eyes nearly crossed. Harry grinned and turned his back to Draco. That's when one of the Weasley twins scooped him up for a dance.

"Hiya, Harry! It's Fred," said twin announced.

"Fred." Harry grinned and put his arms around Fred's neck, who chuckled after looking over Harry's shoulder.

"You've been teasing Draco all night, ya know. It's bound to backfire."

"I'll make it up to him later."

Fred raised an eyebrow. "And here I thought our young Harry was innocent."

Harry snorted. He'd never really been innocent. Not since the night his parents were killed. But he knew that's not what Fred was talking about and he grinned.
"After tonight, I'll be innocent no longer."

"Whoa, Harry. Too much information!" George said coming from behind. So now Harry found himself dancing with both Fred and George. It was all fun, and the twins were behaving. Well, that is to say, they behaved after Draco flashed them his fangs from across the dance floor.
Lucius strode to the bar and stopped two feet behind Sirius. He watched as Sirius accepted a bottle of Firewhiskey from Dirk with a charming smile. Lucius' face was a closed emotionless mask, but his eyes conveyed exactly what he wanted when he looked at the bartender. When the owner looked up after saying something to Sirius, he immediately stiffened. And since Lucius was an investor of sorts in Dirk’s little club- and he wanted to keep it as his club- Dirk promptly excused himself from Sirius and went to work at the other end of the bar. Sirius looked confused for a second before he narrowed his eyes and looked over his shoulder.

"What the hell do you want?" he barked, the turned back and stared at Dirk's backside morosely. There was no way he was going to get any action with Lucius hovering over his shoulder every minute.

"Is it a crime for me to want a drink?" Lucius took the stool beside Sirius and snapped his fingers. There was a spell around the bar area that dampened the music coming from the dance floor, making it easier for people to hear and talk without having to yell. Dirk immediately looked up at the snap and nodded to Lucius. He completed the drink he was making and immediately started on Lucius' drink. Lucius turned back to Sirius to find the Animagus scowling at him. One pale eyebrow rose past his hairline in question.

"You aren't actually thinking about talking to me, are you? There's nothing you could possibly have to say to me."

"But there are things you wish to say to me."

Dirk laid Lucius' drink by his hand and returned to his position down the bar. He'd been completely ignored by the two wizards staring intently at each other. Sirius clenched his jaw tightly shut to keep from answering truthfully. When he felt he could lie convincingly, he spoke.

"I have nothing to say to you." Sirius turned on his stool and stormed away.

Lucius picked up his drink and sipped, his eyes following Sirius' circuit around the dance floor to the back where there were large nook and crannies to socialize or do other more…youthful activities. Lazily, Lucius moved to follow Sirius, his eyes never leaving his prey, and was mentally preparing for a short physical battle.

Sirius managed to find a small alcove at the back. It was, of course, already in use, but after barking viciously at the dozen or so young witches and wizards occupying it, Sirius soon found the alcove empty for his use. Slumping into a chair, he poured a good amount of whiskey into his glass and glared at it for far too long before drinking it. Lucius stood outside, watching Sirius with a calculating look until his face brightened as much as it could for the elder Malfoy.

He moved back to the bar to have a couple more drinks. He would need them before he sought out Sirius again and his body needed to be loose for the beating he was about to instigate. He knew the Gryffindor would not be moving anytime soon, at least not until half the bottle was empty. When he
had a drink, Lucius went in search of his friend and found Severus at a table on the second floor glowering down at all the dancing bodies.

"Anyone you're annoyed with in particular?" he asked, sitting down next to Severus.

"No one in particular. Perhaps the whole lot of them. Harry and Draco included."

"What have they done now?" Lucius leaned forward to peer over the banister and watch the younger generation dancing. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, except… Draco was not dancing with Harry. Knowing the boys, Lucius thought this was extremely odd. "They aren't fighting again, are they? Merlin, I hope not."

"No, not fighting. Watch further."

Lucius took his drink in hand and scooted his chair next to the railing so that he could watch in comfort. He soon grew amused at what was happening. They were performing a dance within a dance, and it appeared Harry was leading and Draco was following. Every time Draco managed to get within touching distance, Harry would weave his way to another friend to dance with, leaving Draco alone to find another partner. Lucius imagined when Harry first began to do this that Draco did not take it well. You do not go around denying a Malfoy anything. But Lucius noticed when Harry danced with anyone, his eyes were only for Draco. This seemed to pacify his son, especially since Harry would usually just ignore his dancing partner and do his own little dance for Draco, trailing his hands over his body, taking off his green shirt so that Draco could see his beautiful form. Harry would then vanish back into the crowd when Draco couldn't stand to just watch his mate anymore. But they were both enjoying it, because Draco would always follow, though not in an obvious way to those around him, and was smirking with pleasure as he moved around to find Harry again.

"Is this some sort of mating ritual?" Lucius finally asked after watching for a time. He had a strange feeling that it was indeed a ritual.

Severus sat back with a sigh and began to rub his temples. "It's a possibility. They are turning into creatures after all."

"Draco will not want to play for very much longer."

Severus snorted in agreement. "He'll take matters into his own hands very shortly. Which is what is supposed to happen during mating rituals such as this. He is the dominant one I think." He gave Lucius a wry look. "Very strange, as we all know you are a submissive."

Lucius ignored Severus and rose. "It's time for my own ritual."

Lucius found Sirius just as he left him except half the bottle had been consumed, just as he predicted. Despite what Sirius wanted to believe, Lucius knew him very well. Probably better than anyone. He walked in and set his cane against the wall on his passing, but took his wand with him and came to stop in front of Sirius.

"What the bloody hell do you want, Malfoy?" Sirius shouted once he'd looked up from his empty glass and found Lucius standing there. He stood up and approached Lucius in a threatening manner; a growl emitting from deep within his throat. Lucius allowed himself to be backed towards the wall until he was a foot away, then stopped.

"I thought I'd let you know that I know you were lying. There are things you want to say to me."

"So what if I lied? I don't see how that's any of your business." Sirius turned away, prepared to leave
and Lucius murmured a quick spell. An opaque wall appeared in front of Sirius, blocking them both in and keeping everyone out and unaware of what was going on behind the wall. Sirius spun around on Lucius. "What the fuck is your problem, Malfoy?"

"We weren't finished with our discussion. You're always leaving before things are finished."

"I'm the one? Me?" Sirius shouted; he lunged forward and roughly pushed Lucius against the wall before spinning away again and running his hands through his hair in frustration. Lucius shook his head to clear it. Sirius had pushed him harder than expected and he'd hit his head fairly hard. This was good. Sirius was ready to snap. But then Sirius turned back to him and made Lucius think perhaps his plan wouldn't work.

"I know what you're trying to do," Sirius spoke softly. "Now, after all these years… but I don't know why. Why? Don't you have a wife? Don't you have the perfect life? Why can't you leave me alone, Malfoy?" Sirius grabbed Lucius and pushed him against the wall once again, but this time did not release his hold from the blond's collar. "Haven't I suffered enough? Why are you doing this?"

"Maybe because I can. Maybe because I thrive in your obvious distress over my mere presence."

"This is just fun for you. Just like it was when we were in school." Sirius released the Slytherin and gave Lucius a pitying look. "I don't know how Harry could love Draco if your son is anything like you. For Harry's sake, I hope he isn't."

Lucius' eyes narrowed. "You should know. You were in love with me."

Sirius smirked and moved closer. "You think so? Maybe you were just a fabulous piece of arse that I didn't fancy giving up just then. You were prime, Malfoy, there's no doubt about that. Gagging for it, Luce. Weren't you? You were. All the time. So easy," Sirius whispered maliciously. "So yeah, at the time I would have said anything to keep you spread."

Lucius' nostrils flared in fury. He pulled back and let his fist swing, hitting Sirius square in the mouth. The slightly taller man staggered back clutching his jaw and astonished Lucius had hit him so hard. Sirius looked into panicked gray eyes and inwardly he brightened just a little bit. Perhaps Lucius wasn't just playing with him. If this was just a game and Lucius didn't really care, he wouldn't have taken Sirius' words so hard. But it was obvious Lucius was bothered by the thought that Sirius never had any feelings for him.

Sirius decided he would run with this and see where it left them both. "What's the matter? Afraid it's true? Did you really think I would pine away for you after you left me for that bitch cousin of mine? What kind of wizard do you take me for? I'm a Black and a Gryffindor. Did you think a Black could really fall under the manipulations of a Malfoy?"

"You told me you loved me, Sirius. Are you saying you lied?" Lucius drawled, furiously trying to regain his composure. Sirius was being cruel, which was his way of coping, Lucius knew. But the Gryffindor was being more malicious than normal. Sirius had never spoken that way to him before, and he was very much afraid he'd been mistaken on Sirius' feelings for him even after all these years.

"Maybe I did say I loved you at the time. But it's just as I've told you." Sirius chuckled darkly and turned away once again. "I would have said anything to get you back on your hands and knees."

Lucius saw red and threw his fist out again, catching the side of Sirius' face with his family ring, cutting the skin beside Sirius' right eye where blood started to run down his cheek. Lucius wasn't finished yet, and he launched himself at the Animagus; kicking Sirius' legs out from under him and watched smugly as Sirius' back hit the floor hard. Lucius bent down, prepared to land another blow,
but Sirius' fist came out of nowhere and landed a brutal punch to his right eye. The blond staggered back, his hand over his eye.

"You hit me!" he cried incredulously.

"You started it!" Sirius roared as he regained his feet and threw himself at Lucius, planting a fist in Malfoy's stomach before they both went down in a tangle of limbs.

Punches and kicks were aplenty, as was the testosterone, and the lust that always came when Lucius and Sirius physically fought one another. Lucius felt Sirius' erection against his thigh when the Gryffindor twisted around to try and remove Lucius' hand which was clawed and digging in between his ribs. And usually this would have caused him pause, but Lucius was beyond the game he had started to play. He was humiliated and he had never felt as low as he did now. Like used garbage. That was what Sirius was saying: all Lucius had been good for was the sex.

Sirius noticed when Lucius started to fight like a dying man, dragging out the last of his strength to fight with. He let Lucius have a couple more punches before they rolled over and he had the blond pinned to the ground once more. But he didn't go on with the fight. Sirius didn't have it in him to hurt Lucius anymore. He moved off the blond and took himself a few feet away to try and control his temper. Hitting Lucius was like hitting a girl, and he hated doing it.

When he turned around, he cursed silently. More disgust swamped him when he saw the look in his ex lover's eyes. Lucius' eyes were dull and he continued to lie on the floor, staring up at the ceiling as if he were dead. His blond hair had come out of the leather thong that he'd tied it back with, and was spread wildly out around his head. And despite the look in his eyes, Lucius was looking entirely too appealing to Sirius.

"Fuck!" Sirius looked around wildly, as if an answer to his problem was somewhere nearby. Lucius had yet to move. "Fuck, Luce! What...why? I just don't understand this!"

"Don't worry, Black. You will not be seeing me again."

Lucius dissolved the wall from his position on the ground. Really he would have moved, except his body and his heart were screaming at him for a pain-numbing potion. At least he was behind the table and no one would see him lying on the floor in such an undignified manner. And if they did, he would only blast them with a strong memory charm. He hated himself at the moment. He hated himself, and he hated Sirius. The only person besides his son he ever loved. And apparently Sirius had never loved him back.

You're a grown man, for Merlin's sake, Lucius! Get off the floor! This is not how a Malfoy is supposed to act. Lucius threw his arm over his eyes and tried to block out the voice of his dead father. Why was it whenever he held internal conversations with himself, it was always his father's voice he heard?

Sirius clenched his fists when he saw the arm covering Lucius' eyes start to shake. He took one step towards Lucius, hesitated, and then took another step. His fists unclenched on his third step, and by his fourth step, Sirius was...almost sure of what he would do.

"Get off the floor, Malfoy. You're getting all dirty. I know you hate that."

"Fuck off," Lucius drawled very clearly, but he did move to sit up, and gracefully at that, and started looking around for the black hair tie.

"Looking for this?"
Lucius looked and sighed when he spotted the hair tie dangling off Sirius' finger. "Drop it and be gone."

"No." Sirius grabbed Lucius' arm and pulled him to his feet. Lucius stood stiffly in front of Sirius and watched with narrowed eyes as Sirius reached over his shoulders to retie his hair.

"If you do not step away from me in the next three seconds, I will curse a hole through your chest. And I won't care what Harry does to me for killing you," Lucius hissed.

He eventually backed away himself, as Sirius didn't seem to be taking his threat very seriously. He should. Lucius was very tempted to curse Sirius' head off. Piece of arse! No Malfoy was ever considered just a piece of arse! It was the other way around! Malfoys were always the user and never the used!

Seeing the look in Lucius' eyes, thereby knowing exactly what Lucius was thinking, Sirius rolled his eyes. "Merlin, Lucius, I was lying. It was a bloody lie."

"Which part?"

Sirius shook his head and asked his own question. "You came in here to fight, didn't you?" he asked, waving around to indicate the small alcove they were in. "You came in here to start a fight." He was so close now that his breath ghosted over Lucius' lips. "There was only ever one thing you wanted when you started the fist fights, Luce."

"Don't call me that," Lucius hissed right before Sirius' mouth was on his.

Damn the Gryffindor! Sirius had just called him a piece of arse and yet he still could not control his urges around Sirius. Thought processes ceased when Sirius grabbed a handful of his hair and forced his tongue into the blond's mouth. Lucius moaned at the onslaught. It had been a very very long time since he'd been kissed in such a way. It was one of his favorite things about Sirius. The way he kissed. And it confirmed to Lucius what he'd already suspected. None of the passion they'd felt as children had simmered down. Not at all.

"What's going on?" came a yell from beyond the alcove, effectively breaking the short eye-opening and spontaneous kiss.

"It's Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy! What are they doing?" some random person yelled from the dance floor.

Sirius backed away with a groan. "Please, please, please tell me they haven't lost control in front of everybody?"

"That is why we're here. To make sure they behave," Lucius drawled as he stepped around Sirius and out of the alcove; happy they had gone a step in the right direction and licking his previously claimed lips.

"Your mouth is still sinful," Sirius muttered under his breath as he trailed after the smirking blond. Sirius wasn't happy at all. Nothing had been resolved. He still had no answers, only confusion, and Lucius looked far too pleased with himself, as always.

"Pansy! They're doing the vampire thing again! We should do something."

Sirius recognized that voice as belonging to the Zabini boy. He rushed out of the alcove and ran into Blaise, who had been standing quite near and looking up at the balcony. The older wizards' gazes traveled up, and Lucius paled. His son had fangs and they had just sank deeply into Harry's neck.
This was not good!

Harry was having a really good time and he was really very happy at the moment. It would have sucked had he not been enjoying himself at his very first birthday party. But his friends had come through to show him who really cared, and he was having a blast spending time with them all. Even the people he hadn't known very well, like the Slytherins. Even Zacharias Smith wasn't being a complete twat. Until he passed Harry at one point and 'accidentally' ran his hand over Harry's arse. And then for the next thirty minutes Zacharias could be seen running around the club, trying to keep away from a very pissed off blond Slytherin who had every intention of AK'ing the Hufflepuff. Harry was thoroughly amused by all of this, and he didn't even lift a finger to help Smith. Draco was fucking sexy when he was on the warpath and Harry didn't feel like calming Draco down and making that gorgeous dark look of his go away.

After more time dancing, Harry wanted another drink. Some of his friends followed him up, though Draco stayed on the dance floor and told him he'd be up in a few minutes. When Draco did arrive, everyone was laughing, talking, and drinking together as if they'd always been friends. Neville was even having a conversation about Herbology with Gregory Goyle. Ginny, Pansy, and Angelina Johnson were discussing ideas for a new line of witch clubbing clothes. From what he heard, they would take fashion just a little bit away from the Muggle industry and form better suited clothes from the traditional Wizarding garb. Harry heard enough to be interested. It was a good idea and he thought he would have a talk with them and see if they were serious about it. If so, he wouldn't mind backing them financially until their clothing line took off. He expressed his opinion to Draco over their bond as the blond had chosen to sit away from him. Draco also liked the idea though he was a little uncertain about giving out a loan.

*That is because you are stingy.*

*No. I'm just careful about what I do with my money. You should take lessons from me.*

*Not likely. I've seen some of the things you do with your money...and why are you still sitting over there, Draco?*

It seems Draco decided now was the time to take matters into his own hands because Harry decided their game of hide and seek was over and had expressed his wish that Draco sit with him. He wanted Draco's hands on him already. But Draco only smirked at him and sat beside Hermione at the other end of the table.

"Did you catch Zacharias?" she asked the blond. Draco grinned but refused to tell her what he did to the boy who dared touch his Harry. No one had mentioned that Smith had been missing for the last twenty minutes.

Eventually some of them got into a game of I Never and after several rounds, half the witches and wizards were slurring their words and having trouble sitting up straight. Harry was having trouble of his own as he was seeing two of Draco at the moment. Two Dracos' whose eyes were intent on telling Harry exactly what he wanted to do to him at the moment. He was very glad when the game finally ended and everyone decided more dancing was called for.

Draco and Harry remained seated, their friends giving both wizards knowing stares and sly winks as they left. When they were alone, Draco stretched his legs out and crossed them at the ankles before leaning back with his hands behind his head.

"I didn't know you liked to play games, Harry," he commented with a small smile, but his eyes were glinting dangerously. Harry cleared his throat and ran a hand through his hair in a nervous gesture. It
was really hard to think clearly with Draco eating him up with his eyes the way he was.

"Games are usually fun," he said, trying to sound at least slightly in control, though he knew it wouldn't be for long.

"Especially if you win at the end."

"Do you think you're going to win?"

"I'm a Malfoy. That's a stupid question."

"Right…I forgot." Harry rolled his eyes and picked up a butterbeer. He was not going to break first. He was not!

They had a staring contest that lasted fifteen minutes. In that time Severus came up to see that they weren't getting into any trouble. "What are you two doing?"

Harry shrugged his shoulders and continued to drink, trying to wet his dry mouth. Draco waved his wand and vanished the bottle.

"Hey!"

"I don't want you drunk tonight. You will be clear headed by the time we leave here, Harry."

It was completely clear to Harry and Severus the reason why Draco wanted to keep Harry sober, and just in case Harry was oblivious, the way he usually was, Draco sent images into Harry's head, making the Gryffindor blush an interesting shade of scarlet. Severus was no fool and knew what was going on. He made a sound of disgust and vacated the top floor to leave his nephew and godson to it and fervently hoped they didn't do anything undignified in the public's eye.

"Draco?" One pale blond eyebrow arched up in question at Harry's determined tone. Harry stood up and began to walk around the table toward Draco, trembling. Why was he so nervous all of a sudden? He knew what he wanted, but he didn't know how to go about it. He wasn't exactly experienced in this sort of thing. "Do you wanna dance with me?"

Draco waited until Harry was standing in front of him before answering. "Do I want to dance with you?" he asked lazily while getting to his feet. Harry only had time to give a half nod before Draco grabbed him by his shirt and pulled the surprised Gryffindor against his body. "Are you being coy on purpose?"

Harry remained silent. He didn't think words were necessary at the moment. His actions would speak louder than words, anyway. So he reached out and placed a palm against Draco's chest and grinned when he felt his mate's heart beat. It was certainly beating faster than normal. On par with his. Harry slid his hand down until he could slip it underneath Draco's shirt, which he did, and then he had the strangest feeling come to him when his palm slid over the Slytherins warm skin. It was like coming home and being wrapped in familiarity, something that had never happened to Harry before. And at the same time, when his eyes connected with Draco's, he felt like he was exploring some place new, someplace dangerous; someplace that called to him every waking hour. It was enough to set him off. His body was quivering, warming to a degree that was almost too much, and silently begging Draco to touch him back. It was good they'd been playing the keep away game all night, because he didn't have to wait long for Draco to do something.

For his part, Draco was enjoying the closeness and touch of his mate. He knew Harry was nervous and that the Gryffindor had no experience. Which made Harry's actions that much sweeter. He felt Harry's hands move around to caress the base of his spine; Harry's warm fingers dipping just below
the waistband and he shivered. Draco's eyes flashed silver when Harry grinned at the reaction he received. And before his Gryffindor could do anything else, Draco dipped his head to attack Harry's lips; his tongue easily slipping inside his mate's sexy mouth. He slid his hands into Harry's silky hair, angling their heads to get a better taste, and Harry was very willing to follow his lead. It looked like the two soul mates were trying to suck out each other's souls.

Draco lightened the kiss and tried to pull back but Harry wasn't having any of that and he grabbed Draco's neck to keep him in place. He began to map Draco's mouth out with his tongue, delighting in every taste he found. He drew Draco's tongue into his mouth and sucked on it, loving the purr he heard and felt coming from Draco's chest.

"You love me, Harry?" Draco asked after grabbing Harry's hair and pulling hard on the dark strands, exposing Harry's delicious neck to him.

"Yes!" Harry gasped. A whimper tore through him when Draco tugged harder on his hair. The pain was more than slight but the pleasure he was getting from Draco's rough handling more than made up for it.

Draco grinned down at Harry's face when he realized Harry liked the pain, the rough handling. Their physical relationship was going to better than he ever imagined, and he was prepared to start that tonight.

"Good, Harry. Good," he whispered; his smooth confident drawl running over Harry's neck like warm liquid silk. Draco concentrated on his teeth and grinned when he felt them lengthen. "I love you too."

Harry gasped out a surprised cry when Draco's teeth sank into his neck, but he didn't flinch away. Instead he arched into Draco; clinging to him and feeling nothing but pleasure and more desire as Draco began to pull his little love's blood into his mouth. Draco pushed the Gryffindor back against the railing then and they were so into each other that they were not aware that the dancing crowd below could now see them.

Severus pulled himself away from the shadowed corner he'd hidden in to watch the group he was responsible for. He'd just seen Draco sink his teeth into Harry's neck, and Harry wasn't fighting him off. Instead, Harry had his arms around Draco's neck and his legs wrapped around the blond's waist, and he moved his head further to the side to give Draco better access. When Severus realized what was happening, he raced across the dance floor and to the stairs; met there by a heavily breathing Sirius and Lucius, both looking like they had been busy fighting before Harry and Draco decided to make like vampires.

"Is Draco really doing what it looks like?" Sirius asked.

"And is Harry really letting him?" was Lucius' quandary.

"Stop asking questions! We can't let them do that here!" And Severus continued to climb the stairs.

Draco had only wanted to bite Harry, because he knew the Gryffindor would enjoy it and somehow he knew it wouldn't harm his mate, but as soon as he'd sunk his teeth into flesh and Harry's delicious blood flooded his mouth, he was overcome with blood lust, and began to drink from Harry without any hesitation.

For Harry's part, he could only hold on to Draco as wave after wave of pleasure whipped through him as his blood flowed from his neck and into Draco's mouth. The pleasure was so great Harry thought he might come in his pants. Draco was making whimpering noises as he drank; as if he had
been deprived of food and liquid his whole life and had just been offered a glorious feast and didn't know whether he should laugh or cry over the gift.

"Draco, for the love of Merlin, stop!" Lucius pleaded as the three wizards arrived to stand behind the soul mates and found that Draco was truly acting very much like a vampire and drinking his mate's blood. "You cannot do this right in the middle of a public place! Everyone is watching… Stop!"

Lucius had to hit Draco upside the head before his son even realized he was being talked to. He withdrew his fangs and hissed over his shoulder at them. Sirius shuddered when he saw blood dripping from Draco's fangs to the floor. Draco turned back to Harry's neck and licked the wound closed. Harry looked dazed and was utterly content to stay wrapped up in Draco, a lethargy taking him over with every passing second.

Draco didn't know how but he knew Harry wouldn't regain any of his right senses without his own blood intake. He tightened his grip, making sure Harry didn't lower his legs from around his waist and moved away from the railing- much to the relief of Severus and Lucius- and took Harry to a darkened corner where the people below couldn't see them.

The elder wizard's watched as Draco lowered himself into a chair and let his head fall back to expose his neck. It was obviously instinct that was driving the boys to such madness, because Harry hissed as his fangs appeared and he immediately went for the juicy spot of Draco's neck. Draco hadn't expected the amount of pleasure that accompanied the pain with Harry's bite, and he gripped Harry's hips so tightly he was sure there would be bruises there by tomorrow. Harry didn't seem to mind; in fact this seemed to encourage him. He began to rub his erection against the Slytherin's and Draco briefly entertained the notion of removing both their pants and having Harry ride him here and now. Immediately he pushed that fantasy away for a time when Harry wasn't still a virgin, and would actually enjoy being intimate in that position. Draco relaxed and closed his eyes, and let Harry do what he wanted. This was also enjoyable because Harry seemed to want to run his hands over every inch of Draco and keep up with the gyrating hips. In another moment, Draco knew he was going to come and he gripped Harry's hips to keep him moving.

"Harry…Gods, Harry," he moaned, and his eyes shut tight as he found himself and Harry orgasm as one. Draco found it hard to breathe and tried to stop the tremors running through his body from the aftermath, but Harry wasn't finished with him yet and all he could do was hang on. He didn't even realize the three older wizards were still standing a few yards away.

"Should we make them stop until they get home? It seems the closer to midnight it becomes, the more they display. I don't think they've ever done that before." Lucius waved at Harry drinking his son's blood, and shuddered, disgusted. Partly because he was being turned on and partly because they were drinking each other's blood like it was chocolate syrup.

"No," someone said from behind the three men. They turned to look at Hermione in question. She stepped forward and spoke softly, motioning to Harry and Draco. "Harry needs to finish drinking Draco's blood or else he really wouldn't be useful for anything until the morning. If they both drink from each other, it kind of balances it out, and their energy is increased rather than decreasing, which would be the outcome if only one partner drank."

"How in the bloody fuck do you know this, Hermione?" Sirius asked in wonder. "How do you always know this stuff?"

"There's this thing called reading, Siri. Really, you should try it." That started an argument between Lucius and Sirius, which left Hermione all to Severus.
"You figured it out? Vampire seems obvious, but that's not it is it?" he asked, and then he immediately wondered what was wrong with her when she nodded to answer but refused to look him in the eye. She'd never done that before and he hated it. He hated that she wasn't looking him straight in the eye.

"No, it's not vampires. Actually Voldemort helped me. I would never have found the book if he hadn't told me. I…" Hermione turned to Lucius and touched his arm to get his attention away from a fuming Sirius. "Er… it was in the Dark Arts section, Mr. Malfoy. I hope you don't mind that I borrowed it. And I wondered…if I may…have permission to study other books in there?" Hermione blushed when Lucius raised an appraising eyebrow.

"You wish to study the Dark Arts, Miss. Granger?" Hermione nodded enthusiastically. Lucius smirked and inclined his head. "Very well. You have my permission."

"Thank you, sir. I'm sure I'll learn a lot."

"Excuse me?" drawled Severus in a low silky voice that bordered on the dangerous, drawing Hermione's eyes directly to his. "Did you say the Dark Lord was near you? He talked to you?"

"Yes." Sirius and Lucius exchanged troubled looks when Severus stepped forward to command the witch's full attention. "He talked with both Ginny and me, and he touched my head. It didn't hurt!" she exclaimed quickly when Severus' eyes turned murderous. "We were actually having a very nice discussion with Voldemort about what we think should happen in regards to muggleborns when they come to the Wizarding World. Voldemort said he wanted to hear more of our ideas."

"Did you just say 'nice discussion' and 'Voldemort' in the same sentence?" Sirius asked, peering closely at her to make sure it was actually Hermione and not someone under the Polyjuice Potion.

"Something's going on with him, Severus," Lucius muttered. "Ever since you told him about Dumbledore using him…"  

"The Dark Lord has been regaining his sanity," Severus replied.

"But how? And why now?"

"Er…hey?" The four turned to see a very embarrassed and thoroughly mussed Harry being hugged from behind by an equally mussed Draco who smirked shamelessly at them. "Um…Thanks for hiding us... Sort of." Harry broke off and looked anywhere but at the wizards staring oddly at them.

"Anyway…." Draco drawled, "we're going down to dance some more. Coming Hermione?" Draco nudged Harry forward towards the stairs, and began walking in step behind him, never releasing his grip from around Harry's waist. He fully intended to have Harry's body against his the rest of the night.

"Oh, yes!" Hermione cried a little too enthusiastically, hoping to get away from the older wizards; a beady blacked eyed one in particular. But her hopes were dashed when Severus grabbed her arm as she made to follow her friends.

"I have things to discuss with you." He looked at Sirius and Lucius and motioned for them to leave. Lucius immediately began to walk away, but Sirius was unsure whether he should leave Hermione alone with Snape. Lucius looked back and sighed. He walked up and grabbed his arm, dragging the surprised wizard behind him for a full three strides before Sirius roughly pulled his arm away with a growl and then stormed down the stairs, Hermione forgotten. Lucius shook his head and followed after.
By the time Lucius had disappeared from sight, Hermione was back to staring at Severus' shoulder. He gritted his teeth and resisted the urge to grab and shake her.

"Tell me more about the Dark Lord."

For the moment, Hermione was relieved and hoped that's all he wanted to talk about.

"I don't know what else you want to know. He wasn't with us for very long. Ginny and I were in the library; I was looking for more information on magical creatures. The door opened and in comes Voldemort." Hermione looked at Severus then. Her eyes portrayed the surprise and confusion she'd felt in those moments in the library. "I was terrified. I thought I was going to die, despite what everyone was saying about him and the Death Eaters leaving us alone.

"I had my wand out, Ginny woke up, and her wand was out too. But all he did was sit down, his wand nowhere to be seen, and conjures us two chairs and tells us to sit. It was an order said in the nicest way possible." Hermione took a breath, and sipped the drink she'd been holding. Severus motioned for her to take a seat at the table nearest to them. She nodded gratefully and sat.

"Do you want me to go on?"

"Yes."

"We sit, because honestly I didn't think we could do anything else. I figured we'd wing it…" Severus rolled his eyes.

"Bloody Gryffindors." He earned himself a glare and he smirked in return. Hermione sat back a little and cleared her throat, her cheeks gone suspiciously pink.

"Any way, it's logical to expect Ginny and I were terrified and at such a time we didn't want to be played with."

Severus leaned forward a little and rested his arm on the table, letting his hand fall to rest very near her own. "It seems perfectly reasonable." He did not miss the tremble of her hands when he used that silky tone of voice. His smirk deepened.

"So we were blunt about it, demanding to know why he isn't killing us and why he's all of a sudden not bothered by Mudbloods and blood traitors."

"Hermione…" he groaned.

"What?" she demanded, and picked up her glass again to down the contents. "I think it was a perfectly levelheaded reaction, Severus!"

"All right." He patted her hand to calm her. "Go on." Neither made to mention he hadn't removed his hand from hers.

"He…um, offered to kill us since we seemed so keen on the idea, and his wand was in his hand before we could even blink." Hermione gasped when Severus unconsciously squeezed her hand. He let go and moved away. "But we quickly reassured him we wanted to live. And then we asked him if he really wanted to rid the world of all Muggles. He laughed. Said that's the lie Dumbledore was telling and that he hadn't gone that insane before to ever believe that could be achieved." Hermione stopped, and her brows drew together in contemplation. Then she looked at him steadily. "I think he realized he'd gone insane, Voldemort, I mean. I think he knew he had lost his mind, and now I think he's getting it back."
"Yes, that does make sense. Anything else happen?"

"No. We just talked about how the Wizarding schools need to have mandatory curriculum for muggleborns so that we can be properly mixed in with this world. I have one idea, but I'm not sure how many people would like it. Especially the parents of the muggleborns. I know my parents would never have agreed, but if the choice had been put in my hands, even at the age of eleven, I would have chosen the Wizarding world."

"What was your idea?" Hermione looked him in the eye for a second before dropping her gaze back to his shoulder. Severus had had enough of that. He grabbed her chin and jerked it up until she was staring into furiously swirling dark eyes, and her lips parted slightly to take in a shuddering breath when he bent forward so that their noses were nearly touching.

"Stop doing that, Hermione. You will look me in the eye, witch, and tell me why you've begun to act like you don't have a bloody backbone!"

Hermione jerked her chin away from his grasp and her eyes were blazing when she stood up, planted her hands on her hips, and glared down at him. Severus remained transfixed as he stared at her in the little black party dress with a form that clearly belonged to a woman. Her soft russet hair glowed like an angel's halo around her head, but her glare was that of a demon that had just been double-crossed. She made a very appealing picture and Severus was sure he was about to do something stupid.

"I don't know everything!" Hermione cried. "I don't know how I'm supposed to feel or act or anything, okay? This isn't something that happens all the time, Severus. And you're not helping at all…" she trailed off at the end, and her hands slid down to hang at her sides. She looked away first and then turned to leave, but Severus couldn't allow her to walk away in that state. Knowing full well that there would be horrible repercussions for his following actions, Severus reached out and brought the young witch in for an embrace. Hermione stiffened at first, but moment-by-moment she relaxed until she felt comfortable enough to loosely wrap her arms around his waist. **This feels too right,** she thought, and was terrified by that.

"I don't understand what you're talking about," he whispered in her ear. "I don't really care, either." He grinned when her head jerked back with a gasp. Her eyes widened and she froze when Severus moved forward to kiss her. Hermione stopped breathing but her heart was pumping triple time, and then he slanted his mouth against hers and she closed her eyes when she felt his tongue trace her lips. She gripped the front of his dress shirt tightly and invited him in.

Pansy trekked up the stairs on a mission to find Hermione and froze on the third stair to the last when her gaze landed on two figures in the back shadows. Holy fuck! Was that Professor Snape and Hermione? Merlin, it was! Pansy didn't know what to do! She opened her mouth to say something, thought better of it and snapped her mouth shut again. Then she looked left and right for the answer, and when she didn't find it there, she turned around and immediately caught sight of red hair down below among the dancing masses. It was like a beacon of logic and she raced down the stairs towards it. **Thank Merlin! It's Ginny.** Somehow, Ginny had managed to get Harry away from Draco for a dance, but Draco was right beside him dancing with Angelina Johnson and Luna Lovegood of all people, looking like he was thoroughly enjoying being the middle of that sandwich.

"Ginny, I need you now!" she screamed over the loud pumping music. "Pardon me, Harry! Emergency." And then she dragged Ginny away and up the stairs.

"Pansy! Do you have any idea how hard I worked to get Harry to myself for a few minutes? Draco was vicious!" Ginny nearly shrieked on the way up.
"Shut up!" Pansy hissed. "Just look!"

They got to the top and Pansy was amazed to see the Professor and Hermione were still going at it. Severus was snogging the life out of Hermione as if he were as young as she was. Ginny took one look and slapped a hand over her mouth to keep from screaming her surprise. When she was sure she wouldn't have verbal diarrhea, she dropped her hand.

"What do we do?" Pansy asked.

Ginny looked at her sharply. "Nothing. We forget we saw this, understand? This never happened," she whispered. Pansy looked like she wanted to argue, but Ginny leaned in so she wouldn't have to raise her voice. "This is to protect another Gryff/Slyth couple, Pansy. Look at them. It's been leading up to this for a bit. In Hermione's case certainly."

Pansy regarded the unlikely couple, and nodded. "Do you think it will last?"

"For Hermione, this is big. She never felt like this for my brother."

"How do you know that?"

"She's like a sister, I know her and I know what she wants and she's wanted him for ages." And Ginny knew this was something that should last because of the way Snape was kissing Hermione. Merlin, Snape was hot like that. He had her wrapped tightly in his arms, his fingers thrust into her hair. Ginny could tell Snape was making Hermione feel like the world was shaking because she was holding onto him as if the world was falling out from under her feet.

Ginny shook her head, gave the odd couple an amused last look, before she and Pansy returned to the dance floor, and purposefully dragged Harry and Draco away from each other again.

"Dammit, Pansy! Can't you see I don't want to dance with you?" Draco yelled in frustration.

"Come now, Draco. No need to be rude. Besides, it's Harry's birthday. You can't keep him with you all night. Let him have some fun with his friends."

"Shut up," Draco grumbled, and hissed when a slow song came on and Pansy wouldn't let him go and grind Harry. "I hate you."

"No you don't," Pansy happily remarked and snuggled her cheek against her best friend's chest. Draco sighed and put his arms around her. "There. Just like old times."

"Yeah, whatever." Draco dropped his cheek on top of her head. "What was with you and Ginny? What's happening upstairs?" Pansy looked up and knocked into Draco's chin. "Ouch! Dammit! What, Pansy?"

"It was Hermione and Professor Snape." There was no need to ask what she meant. Draco knew her well enough to know what she was talking about.

"Pansy! You loud mouth!" Ginny yelled from beside them where she and Harry were dancing.

"Seriously!" Harry and Draco yelled, and immediately pushed Pansy and Ginny together, so that they were each dancing with the same sex, much to the boys delight. Ginny glared at Pansy, who was nodding at the boys.

"You were supposed to forget you ever saw anything!" Ginny hissed into Pansy's face.
"I thought you'd want them to know."

Ginny looked up and sighed, and then she spotted movement above and saw Hermione rushing down the stairs in obvious distress. "This doesn't look good. Snape fucked up."

"I'm going," Harry said when he caught the movement as well and then he rushed through the dancing crowd, barely catching her before she would have left the club.

"Hermione? What's wrong? Where are you going?"

"Oh, Harry!" She desperately tried to hide that something was bothering her. "Nothing is wrong…I just need to go home. I'm sorry."

"Don't lie. Something is definitely wrong. I'll take you home. We can talk about it when we get there," Harry persisted. There was no way he was leaving Hermione alone, not when she looked so vulnerable.

Hermione sighed in defeat because she knew that's what Harry was thinking, and he wasn't about to take no for an answer. He rarely did. "No, Harry. It's your birthday. You should stay here. Why don't we go over to the bar for a minute?"

Harry grinned and took her hand, but then his brows drew together in worry. She was shaking, and it looked like she might cry as well. Once they sat, Harry ordered two Firewhiskeys.

"What's wrong with you lot?" Dirk asked, exasperated. "You're all in here with some sort of a problem."

"We're a dysfunctional family, I guess," Harry replied, and then downed his shot and watched Hermione do the same. She coughed a bit, but still held her glass out for seconds. Harry did the same. "Are you going to tell me what happened up there? He didn't do anything…inappropriate, did he?"

Hermione's laugh was shrill. "It's funny you should use that word. The entire situation is inappropriate. I'm a little girl. I don't know what I'm doing. That's what he says after changing my life forever!" she spat angrily.

Harry raised a brow and looked up at the second floor where Severus wasn't to be seen. "What did you do to him after he said that? Tell me I still have an uncle," he begged; seriously worried about his idiot uncle. Nobody talked down to Hermione and got away with it without some sort of scar for their trouble.

Hermione sniffed. "He's lucky I know how much it would hurt you if I killed him." She downed her shot and hopped off the stool. "Let's go dance!"

"Are you sure you're all right to do that?"

"It's just dancing, Harry." She grabbed his hand and yanked him to his feet. Harry hurriedly drank his Firewhiskey and set the glass down before he was pulled into the throng of gyrating bodies. The music had sped up again and more people flocked to the dance floor. The heat was intense and the scent of all the dancing bodies was making Harry lightheaded. He and Hermione began to dance and it was kind of weird for Harry because the Firewhiskey seemed to have stripped away most of Hermione's inhibitions because she started to dance with Harry like he could be a potential boyfriend. He wasn't used to dancing with Hermione like that. It scared him.

She looked up and grinned, catching that look in Harry's eyes that meant she was scaring him.
"Sorry Harry, forgot that makes you uncomfortable." She gave him a kiss on the lips and then bounced off to attach herself to Dean for the rest of the song, determined to have fun and forget all about Severus Snape.

Harry turned to go find Draco when he was suddenly pulled back against a hard chest. The body behind him began to move with the music, swinging hips left and right with the beat and guided Harry's hips to do the same until their bodies were lined up and completely in sync. The drumbeats thrummed into their bodies and the energy was pulsating around them. Harry closed his eyes and felt the music more than heard it, letting it take over his movements. He inhaled deeply and smelt Draco behind him. Draco had his head bent so that his hair fell next to Harry and brushed the side of his face. Draco's breath was warm and began to whisper hot promises in Harry's ear, driving the Gryffindor mad. He shivered as Draco's hands passed over his chest and down to grip his hips possessively. Harry pressed into him and felt Draco's breath on his neck seconds before he pressed his warm wet mouth against Harry's skin. Harry moaned and tipped his head further to the side to grant Draco more access. He reached up to tangle his fingers in Draco's hair, pulling the blond's head further down so that when Harry turned a fraction, their lips connected and tongues danced in time to the fast beat they were dancing to.

A slow song came on and their kiss grew lazy and for Harry's part, teasing. Draco's fingers found their way under Harry's shirt, his warm hands mapping out Harry's chest and stomach. When Draco's fingers dipped below his waistband, Harry twisted around and entwined his hands around Draco's neck. Draco's hands shifted from Harry's hips to grip his arse, while lazily kissing Harry's mouth, uncaring that most of the dance floor had formed a small circle around the two well-known wizards who at one point hated each other with a passion.

Harry moaned into his mouth and started to unbutton the silver buttons of Draco's shirt as their kiss evolved into a frenzied state, despite the continued slow pace of the song.

"We're going now," Draco murmured into Harry's mouth. He wrapped Harry tightly against him and Apparated, leaving shrieking wizards and witches in their wake.
As soon as Harry felt his feet touch the ground, he pulled away from Draco and looked around the room. Draco let him. There were candles lit around the room already, casting a warm glow around the large bedchamber. One look out of the window told Harry that they were in a room on an upper floor of wherever they were and that the house was situated on a cliff with a fabulous view of the ocean. Under other circumstances, Harry would have paid closer attention to where he was, but he was so nervous he really didn't see anything except Draco and the large king sized bed that was on a raised dais. Harry immediately took a liking to that bed but he turned away from it to look out the window once more. He was so nervous his entire body was shaking with the nerves.

However, as soon as he felt Draco's hands on his back, the tension seemed to flow out of him and away. He raised his arms when he felt Draco lifting his shirt and was surprised when his mate merely threw the shirt on the floor. It was clear there was only one thing on Draco's mind at the moment; otherwise he would not have just thrown clothes on the floor. Harry had been the victim of Draco's lectures several times about leaving clothes just lying around.

Draco then took his hand and led him over to the bed where he gently laid his Gryffindor down and proceeded to kiss Harry's nerves away, while letting his hands do all the talking. There were no words spoken; there was no need for it. Everything they felt for each other was expressed plainly in their eyes, in every caress and kiss.

Harry sighed into Draco's mouth, loving the taste he found there and craving more of it. His fingers entangled themselves into the soft blond locks and began to kiss Draco ardently. "I can't get enough of you," he whispered into Draco's mouth.

Draco answered by moving faster and he made good time in removing Harry's shoes and pants. It was done so quickly that Harry hadn't even realized it happened until he felt a hand caress his bulging erection. He moaned and lifted his hips.

Draco grinned, sat back and started to unbutton the rest of his shirt. But Harry stopped him and lifted one finger to watch as the fingernail lengthened and sharpened. He placed it over the remaining buttons and dragged his finger down, ripping the fabric and sending buttons flying everywhere.

"Lucky I have two more of these shirts," Draco said easily as Harry pushed the shirt off his shoulders and ran his hands over Draco's chest, across his nipples, eliciting an excited gasp from the blond, before he draped himself over Harry to kiss him again. They both sighed at the contact of skin against skin. It was the most wonderful feeling either of them had felt before.

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"Hush, Harry. I'm simply taking my time and being thorough…" Draco dipped his head and licked the tip of Harry's cock, and held Harry's hips down when the Gryffindor tried to arch up, cursing fluently into the air. Draco looked at Harry's dazed face and grinned and then dipped his head down to do it again, and he did it until Harry was promising retribution.

**I promise you for thiss torture I will kill you.**

"Love it when you talk like that," he growled before sucking on Harry's bottom lip. Harry bucked his hips again and growled when there was no contact.

"So if I talk to you in Parseltongue you'll stop fucking around?" Harry hissed back. Both of them were starting to display; their eyes, teeth, ears, and nails changing. It was nearly midnight, but Harry and Draco were unaware of any of this, they could only feel each other. Harry watched as his soon to be lover stood up to kick off the pants that had been hanging around Draco's ankles. He stepped out of his boxers and watched Harry with glowing silver eyes, as the Gryffindor hungrily traced the length of Draco's pale body with eyes that were glowing emerald-gold; his tongue wetting his lips and caressing the sharp points of his fangs. Draco groaned and returned to his mate. He had planned to do this slowly, but the creatures within them were in frenzy and Harry's impatience was hard to deny as well.

Draco bent forward and took the length of Harry into his mouth, sliding his tongue down the underside of Harry's cock, making Harry choke out a cry and dig his fingers into Draco's soft blond hair. And Merlin, Harry tasted so good! Draco lifted his head to look at Harry's face. He had his head buried back in the pillow, neck exposed to Draco, his eyes closed, and he was biting down on his lip hard enough for it to bleed and leave a trail of blood down his chin and the side of his neck. Draco moved forward to slowly lick away the blood trail, and then returned to his ministrations to Harry's cock. He didn't think he was going to last much longer with Harry acting like that and making those noises…and oh, Merlin, now Harry was begging…

"Draco, please. I can't wait anymore. I'm ready now."

"Not yet." Draco sat up and found his wand, murmuring a lubrication spell to lubricate his fingers, then he spread Harry's legs wider and slowly a finger inside, watching Harry's eyes widen with surprise, and then squeeze tightly closed when the finger began to stretch him. "It's okay, Harry. Relax. It'll get better," Draco promised as he entered another finger and then used his tongue to soothe the entrance.

"Oh, my God!" Harry jerked his hips and watched Draco smile at him before he went down on him again. He felt Draco's tongue lavishing his cock with complete attention even as Draco's fingers prepared him. When Draco entered a third finger, he hit a spot that made spots appear behind Harry's eyes. He nearly choked on his breath when Draco brushed against his prostate, and he came with a harsh cry, his hands reaching out and clinging to the head board as his hips pumped up, his come running down Draco's throat.

Harry didn't think he could feel anymore, but he soon learned he hadn't even begun to feel when Draco shifted over him and lifted his hips.

"Harry?"

Harry opened his eyes when he felt Draco pressing into him, and he lifted his hips to encourage Draco to go on. Draco sighed into Harry's mouth and lazily ran his tongue over Harry's teeth; tasting the roof of his mouth, engaging Harry's tongue in a slow dance to leave the Gryffindor in a dazed and relaxed state so that when he finally pushed into Harry, it didn't hurt so much.
Harry gasped into Draco's mouth and dug his long dangerous fingernails into Draco's back, undoubtedly leaving puncture wounds. In fact, Draco could feel the blood running down his back. He didn't care. All that mattered was Harry, who was now his lover and who was wrapped so tightly around him, whimpering into his mouth. Draco thrust in until he was buried all the way inside. He had to drop his head against Harry's neck to recover from the shuddering pleasure that was overtaking him.

"You okay?" Draco shifted and found that one spot that could make Harry immediately scream.

"God, Draco, yes!" Harry wrapped his legs around Draco in a vice grip. "Fucking move, you bastard!"

Draco bit Harry's neck and chuckled, "you get demanding in bed, Harry."

He reared back and began to thrust wildly into his mate, being driven on by Harry's urgent cries for more and the irritating thought at the back of their heads telling them that time was quickly running out; they wanted to experience as much as they could before the Inheritance would split them apart.

Draco moved his hands between the sweat slicked body and grasped Harry's half raised erection and pumped it in time with his own thrusts. "I can't…. I can't…" Harry tried telling Draco the pleasure was too much, but he could only gasp and lift his hips to receive each and every thrust from Draco.

The bond was opening up further for the transformation and they were feeling every single thing. Their senses were becoming extra sensitive and every kiss, caress, and thrust sent explosive bursts of pleasure through their bodies. Harry never before believed someone could die from pleasure but when he and Draco came together and light exploded behind his eyes he immediately changed his opinion.

Draco collapsed on top of Harry in a shuddering mass and Harry's trembling arms went around his back to lock his lover in place above him. They lay in a comfortable silence and Harry learned something about Draco that pleased him very much. Harry figured Draco would be the kind of bloke who didn't want to talk or bask in the aftermath of being intimate, but in fact, Draco was very expressive with his feelings for the moment and for Harry. He softly kissed Harry's face, continued to whisper his love in Harry's ear…it was exactly how Harry wanted to be treated by his partner after experiencing something so personal. He hadn't thought it was possible, but he found himself falling even more in love with Draco Malfoy.

Harry's wand started to glow red and then emit an annoying high pitched beeping noise that didn't seem like it was going to stop. Draco grabbed a pillow and tried to throw it over the offending wand, but his energy hadn't returned and the pillow dropped heavily to the floor half way to the wand. Harry started to laugh while tracing designs with his fingers on Draco's sweat slicked back.

"You throw like a girl."

"You couldn't do any better…" Draco said. He pulled out of Harry and fell onto his side, pulling Harry with him.

"Only five minutes until midnight," Harry said softly against Draco's shoulder. "You can't touch me when it happens. You know how dangerous that is…"

"I know," Draco sighed and pushed Harry's damp hair out his eyes. He wouldn't let Harry know, but he was starting to worry about tonight and it wasn't because he was worried about what they would turn into. Harry would be gaining his Inheritance, as well as an extra power fluctuation due to their transformations. Not many witches and wizards could take that much power and survive. And Harry
was already very powerful. All that power coming into him at once could destroy his body.

Harry suddenly found himself in a massive hug, he was sure some of his ribs were cracking from the strength of Draco's embrace, and he would have mentioned that had Draco not been kissing him as if the world were about to end. Since Harry didn't have the energy or even the idea of pulling away, he let Draco kiss him until the blond suddenly pulled away.

"You're gonna need Pinkmoon…. I mean Bluemoon. We're going to need her! Get dressed!" Draco had rolled off the bed and found his boxers, shooting a scourify at himself and Harry. Since Harry had no idea why Draco was in a hurry, he was lazy about getting up and dressed. He only had his boxers on when Draco was already in his pants and picking up his shirt.

Draco was cursing himself. No one knew where they were. No one would guess! He was the only one who knew about it, except for his father, but Draco didn't think Lucius even remembered that one visit from the solicitor while he'd been imprisoned. But perhaps his father might have remembered…. Draco cursed and ran his fingers through his hair. He'd only wanted to be alone with Harry, and he never thought about anything else…how could he be so stupid?

Harry was standing near the bed, watching Draco with a worried expression on his face. Draco clenched his fists against the worry battering inside him for his mate. Even if he did find Bluemoon, there was nothing she or anyone could do for Harry until it was all over, and by then it would be too late. No one was supposed to touch a witch or wizard during the time they gained their Inheritance. Friends and family of some have died because they tried to touch and soothe the wizard or witch that was in pain.

Draco took a couple steps towards Harry, and hesitated. "Harry…you…"

"I know what might happen," Harry said coming over to him. "Nothing we can do about it, right? Besides, do you really think I'm supposed to go out like that? Not likely." Harry touched Draco's hand to soothe him but the blond jerked his hand away once he touched him.

"Draco? Wha-"

"You're hot! You're hand just bloody burned me!" Draco started at the red blister on his arm. "Oh Merlin, it's starting." He looked up into Harry's scared eyes.

Harry began backing away. "I'm sorry, Draco. I didn't mean-" Harry began timidly, and flinched when Draco snapped at him.

"Shut up, you stupid Gryffindor! It wasn't your fault." Now was not the time for Harry to have a flashback attack. "It's all right. It's the Inheritance." He managed that more calmly.

Harry was staring at his hands when all the lights went out and they were surrounded by dark silence. Even the sound of their breathing and the beating of their hearts had been muted. For several seconds nothing else happened. And then the rumbling started; a rumbling noise like high waves rushing to the beach.

Sound suddenly exploded around them. It sounded like the strike of lightening to Draco who threw his hands over his ears. And then the light hit, spearing down from the sky in a fiery red blaze. Draco needn't have worried about anyone finding them; they would probably be here in minutes. He quickly made his way to the window, only sparing a second to glance out and away from Harry. The light was high over Britain. He wondered how the Ministry was going to explain it to the Muggles because Draco was sure anyone outside who was looking would see this particular light of Inheritance.
The light poured into Harry as he stood there motionless. His eyes were wide and unblinking, and staring at the spot where Draco had been before he moved to the window. Draco had never witnessed an Inheritance before and his was still a month away so he wasn't sure Harry was reacting the way he should. He seemed frozen like stone.

"Harry?"

Draco started to walk a circuit around his mate. Nothing was happening, at least not physically. They'd gone back to their original forms directly after mating, so now it was only Harry's lithe form standing frozen in the center of the light coming down on him. Harry hadn't moved fast enough to get completely dressed; leaving him only in boxers. His skin was sill tanned… Draco was happy to note he'd gained some weight though…

Harry moved then, his body jerking twice before slowly dropping to his knees. He started to tremble and Draco saw him clenching his jaw tight against the pain slamming into him. "Harry…" Draco whispered helplessly.

He couldn't feel the pain Harry was going through, not through the bond. They were cut off from each other's feelings. But not thoughts apparently because he could still hear Harry screaming in his head. The red beam began to dim and the circle around Harry grew smaller until it was just large enough for Harry's form. The light changed; blackness came down and slammed into Harry, covering him in some dark poisoned mist. Harry began to scream out loud then and he fell over onto his back in agony.

"Harry!"

Draco sank to his knees; tears running down his face as he watched his lover's body fill with too much too quickly; causing Harry to twist and spasm all over the place in his pain.

"I can't do this! I can't just stand here!" he hissed after several more minutes of watching his mate writhing in torturous pain. Harry's screams were turning into pain wracking sobs now and it was killing Draco.

"No, Draco. Don't. Stay away." Harry's voice was a hoarse whisper and he started to push himself back away from Draco, though he wasn't getting very far as he had no energy to really move.

Draco choked up on a retort when pain lanced through his stomach and he dropped to his knees, and sweeping his arms around his waist. He'd completely forgotten about the transformations. Seems that was starting now. The moment the pain let up, Draco continued towards Harry, crawling on his hands and knees.

"Draco! Stop. Harry couldn't go anywhere else. He'd backed himself into a corner, the blood red light following him. Draco was almost to him and he had the determined look in his eye. "No, Draco…” he pleaded even as he felt Draco embrace him in his strong arms and Harry immediately felt immense relief.

"Idiot," Draco groaned out before they were both over taken by the pain and a brilliant green light encompassed them, blinding them from the outside world.

"They are not at Malfoy Manor nor are they here," Severus announced to the surrounding group made up by Lucius, Sirius, Amortia, and himself. Lucius paced by him again and Severus had to resist reaching out, grabbing onto the end of Lucius' long hair and dropping him to the floor.

"It's five past midnight. Surely it has started by now," Lucius said and continued his pace up and
down the corridor of Snape Manor.

The amount of alcohol he had unwisely ingested was doing its trick, and he was allowing everyone to see just how worried about Draco he was. Sirius could not turn a blind eye to this. It was rare for Luce to show his true feelings regarding those he cared about. "They know better than to try and ease the others pain by touching, don't they Severus? Surely Draco would know better than to try…"

He finally came to a stop and looked at Severus pleadingly.

"They are both aware of the consequences of doing such a thing," Severus said.

"Stop worrying, Malfoy," Sirius said, coming to stand in front of Lucius and smirking at him, "Harry won't allow your idiot son to put himself in harm's way. Harry would rather die than to see Draco hurt. Stop your bitching already."

Severus snorted and sent a rare nod of approval Black's way.

"What did you say to me?" Lucius hissed, inwardly surprised when he caught a twinkle in Sirius' eyes.

"You heard me, Luce. Get over it."

Lucius' eyes widened and his lips formed a thin line. Sirius saw the anger blazing in Lucius' gray eyes and wondered if he would lose it in front of everyone. Sirius always had been good at getting Lucius so worked up he forget his Malfoy training.

"I think we've found them!" Hermione called as she ran up to them. "But we better hurry. We're not the only ones who know now."

Hermione led them out of the manor and pointed up into the sky where a glowing red light was shooting up towards the stars from somewhere in the east. "It must be Harry's Inheritance."

"It is imperative we get there before Dumbledore does," Severus said.

"That's only half our problem," Amortia said. "We need to get there before the Muggles do and inadvertently make things worse."

"But how do we get there? We can't use brooms; that will take too long. And we can't Apparate because we don't have an exact location."

Lucius' brows were drawn together. "Great Yarmouth is in the east, yes?" he started to mutter to himself until his face was filled with comprehension. "Draco bought a property in Great Yarmouth last summer." He spun to glare at Severus. "When I was in Azkaban. I was only told once when the sale went through. My solicitor thought I should know but as that was the beginning of my incarceration I put it out of my head until now."

Sirius snorted. "Your time was nothing."

"We can get into that argument later, wizards," Amortia said in a firm voice. "Do you have a location, Lucius?"

"Yes." And he proceeded to describe the location of the property. A piece of property he had yet to lay eyes on.

"Is that dark magic?" Hermione asked and pointed at the shortening beam of light again. As it disappeared down, the bright red light turned dark as blood until it was almost hard to see if you
hadn't been looking there in the first place.

"It is something dark. It must be the power of the creatures they become. Let's go." Severus grabbed Hermione's arm, much to her consternation, and Apparated. Sirius, Lucius, and Amortia followed.

"This is nice, Lucius. You let your son buy this?"

"No, I did not. He did this behind my back," Lucius spit as they all stared up at the cliff side house that apparently belonged to Draco Malfoy. The black light was now disappearing and from the window of the tower room, a bright green light speared out through the darkness. From down below Severus, Sirius, Amortia, Lucius, and Hermione heard Harry and Draco screaming in pain, and then it just stopped.

"Something's happening!" Hermione yelled behind her, and then bolted into the house without waiting to see if she were followed. She raced up the two flights of stairs to the tower, and it wasn't too difficult to spot which room they were in, because the glowing green light was escaping the room from the crack at the bottom of the door.

She pushed on the door and it was very difficult to open as if she were pushing against an immense pressure. She'd only been able to get it cracked open when Lucius pushed her aside and he and Sirius gave it a go with their shoulders.

"We could try blasting the door…" Sirius panted after he and Lucius weren't able to do any more than Hermione had.

"Yes, let's introduce some more magic to the magic already swirling around inside the room. I'm sure that will have positive results," Severus sneered.

"Hermione. You can fit through that crack. You check and tell me what's happening." Amortia ordered and was immediately obeyed. Hermione squeezed herself past the sliver of opening and immediately fell to her knees under the pressure of Harry and Draco's magic building up around them. She dragged her head up and caught sight of where the green light was originating. Hermione gasped and crawled back out into the hall, where Severus helped her to her feet.

"They're together," she panted and leaned against the wall. "Together and the magic is too much in there."

"What do you mean together? They're in the same room?" Amortia asked. Hermione nodded and then shook her head.

"Draco has his arms wrapped around Harry. They didn't keep away from each other."

"Fools!" Severus hissed, and he, Lucius, and Sirius redoubled their efforts to get the door open.

"Do you think it's safe to go in there? Will they be okay?" Hermione asked the Healer.

"I don't know, Hermione."

"Got it!" Sirius exclaimed as he and Lucius fell into the room when the door swung in; the pressure suddenly vanishing. "Malfoy, get off!"

"Maybe I would if we had a little more time, Siri."

Amortia snorted as she and Hermione passed the two on the floor. Severus looked down and sneered at them. "Really, Lucius? You're as bad as Draco. Perverse, the both of you."
Lucius smirked and slowly dragged himself off the stiff Gryffindor. Once Lucius was off him, Sirius scowled and sat where he was, watching the green glowing young men in trepidation. Amortia and Severus stood as close as they dared to be and discussed the situation.

"One of them disrupted the Inheritance," Amortia murmured, looking down at the two unconscious wizards.

"It would have been Draco."

"Yes. It must have been very hard for him to stand by and watch. Harry would have been in immense pain and unable to really move. But at least they are both alive."

Their eyes were open and you could see them breathing. But their eyes were glazed over and they didn't blink or move in any way, and as Amortia and the others watched, a silver ribbon of magic materialized and swirled over the transforming wizards' heads; it swirled around and in between them. The small ribbon separated and passed into their heads, making the young wizards loose whatever consciousness they had left. They were then lifted off the ground by some unseen force and separated a few feet apart, and the silver ribbon coiled around each wizard's body.

"The Inheritance is over. The transformations are beginning," Amortia explained.

Severus felt a little tension leave him. "Harry survived the Inheritance then…" It was clear he did as he was still breathing. It was then Lucius and Sirius moved closer.

"Your son may have saved Harry's life by interfering with the Inheritance," Amortia said to Lucius. "The power they are receiving now would have killed him. I didn't think I would need to worry you about that, because I didn't think they could possibly gain this much power…" she explained waving a hand towards the silver ribbons.

"How do you know it would have killed Harry? How can you tell they are getting power now?" Sirius asked and moved closer.

Amortia moved around the bodies and pointed. "The silver ribbon has multiplied and several are weaving in and out of both their bodies. That is the power. The strength of the creature power is indicated by its color. Silver being the second highest."

"Look!" Hermione interrupted and pointed to Draco. "They're growing!"

"Draco more than Harry." Sirius turned to Severus. "He's not going to be happy about that. Harry hates that he's short."

"Harry's not short. He's the perfect height," Hermione defended. "Draco won't let him get all that depressed about it."

They watched as Harry and Draco's hair began to grow as well. It grew until there was a curtain of blond and ebony hair brushing against the floor. Hermione's eyes widened. Harry and Draco were on their backs hovering at least four feet in the air.

"That really is long hair," She whispered.

Sirius suddenly turned to the door and pointed his wand at it. "Dumbledore is here," he hissed to Lucius. Severus and Lucius moved to stand beside Sirius.

Hermione drew her wand and moved closer to her boys. She looked down quickly and saw Harry's face was becoming more angular and his features were softening. He still looked like himself, yet he
was very fair now, more feminine, and with that long dark hair and the pointed ears...hang on!
Pointed ears? Hermione bent forward to get a better look. The book she found in the library
regarding the *Ukatae* did not have a picture or any illustrations of what the *Ukatae* looked like, and
she hadn't had enough time to look up a picture. Hermione was startled because she recognized what
they were.

"The *Ukatae* are elves!" she exclaimed, astonished that her favorite fairy tale creatures actually did
exist.

"Well yes..." Amortia began in a tone that suggested she knew everything there was to know about
the *Ukatae*. Hermione had to bite her tongue from saying something that might offend the nice Death
Eater.

"But I didn't know these elves really existed. When everyone says elves, I assume they are speaking
about House Elves. But they are turning into Elves like the ones from Tolkien's books-"

"Ah yes. I've read those books. Very clever, for a muggle." Hermione's eyes widened. "And yes, the
*Ukatae* do resemble them in certain aspects, and yet they aren't as *tame* as they are portrayed by most
muggles. The *Ukatae* do have dark natures..."

"How do you mean?" Hermione turned to Amortia. "They won't be themselves anymore? Is that
what you're saying? They'll become these mindless dark creatures who only thrive in chaos and
destruction?"

"Clearly, Hermione, you've been reading too much fiction. Nothing is ever as black and white as
books portray things. Otherwise I wouldn't have the mark of the Dark Lord, would I? Don't worry. I
doubt their dispositions will change...much." Amortia turned back to study Harry and Draco, and
left Hermione with a mind that was not eased.

"Hermione! Send a Patronus message to the twins and Charlie as well," Severus said. "Also have
Molly notified about exactly what is going on here. We'll want her on our side for this. We can't call
Remus, as it's the full moon."

Hermione nodded and went to the window to send out the messages and after a moment's hesitation,
she sent out one last message. And in doing so, she thought she had lost her mind. But it never hurt
to cover all the bases.

"Dumbledore has sealed us in. No one can Apparate in or out," Lucius said.

"Fine then. We'll seal ourselves in this room until Harry and Draco are stable. We can't do much of
anything until the transformations are finished and if they survive, we have enough potions to help
them recover."

"So we're just going to tuck in and wait?" Sirius rounded on Severus, incredulity written all over his
face.

"We can't do much now and risk Harry and Draco getting hurt in the cross fire," Lucius said,
appearing at the Animagus' shoulder. "Hopefully the Weasleys can round up some support for us."

"Do you know how odd it is to hear you say that?" Sirius asked.

"Imagine how I feel saying it." Lucius half grinned at him, and he thought Sirius was going to
respond with a grin of his own, but Severus always seemed to have spectacular timing.

"Can you help me with these wards or shall we all lay in wait for Dumbledore to burst down the
door?" the Potion Master asked, his silken voice laced with venom. Sirius turned away from Lucius and the blond sent a glare Severus' way.

"Come, Hermione. Let's help them. The stronger the wards, the longer we all stay safe," Amortia said, tapping Hermione on the shoulder as she passed.

It took a very long and strenuous twenty minutes to erect the wards around the room, and by the time they were finished, all of them were panting and Hermione had to sit down and rest her head on her knees. Dumbledore had been trying to keep them from raising protection around the room, and though he was far more powerful than those in the room, Hermione knew that she and her fellow witch and wizards were powerful when combining their magic. Which was how they were finally able to raise all the wards.

"We're safe for now," Lucius said as he tucked his wand away and walked over to the softly glowing *Ukatae*.

"That's good. I don't think I could be of any use now." Hermione wiped her arm across her sweating brow and took a deep breath. She looked up again to see a hand stretched out in front of her. She recognized those fingers. She dreamed about those long precise fingers before.

Hermione closed her eyes, begging the humiliation to leave with the man in front of her. How dare he act as if nothing happened! As if he had never said the most hurtful things to excuse his behavior. To even go so far as to call her an impressionable child who didn't know better. Ha!

Her eyes snapped open and she pushed his hand away. "I don't need your help, thank you." Hermione managed to stand without making a fool of herself and crossed the room to hide beside Amortia. The moment she looked down at Harry and Draco, the Potions Master was forgotten.

"Merlin, they look beautiful and…well…” Hermione cocked her head to the side, studying her unconscious friends, trying to come up with a word that described what she was thinking. Only she didn't exactly know how she would describe the feeling she got from looking at the elves. At least, she hadn't known how to describe it until Harry and Draco opened their eyes and everyone could see the power swimming behind them.

"They look dangerous," Lucius supplied for her, and she nodded. That was exactly right. Draco and Harry had a beauty that was hard to turn from but that beauty was also treacherous and anyone looking in their eyes could see that. And all this was without them displaying. Hermione wondered how a complete transformation would look on them.

"Will it be over soon?" she asked.

"SEVERUS, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO GIVE UP THIS RIDICULOUS STANDOFF."
Dumbledore's voice boomed around them. Seems the headmaster preferred to use the Sonorous spell rather than yelling through the door this time. At least he'd moved out of the house. "I ONLY HAVE HARRY AND MR. MALFOY'S BEST INTENTIONS IN MIND. WE MUST SEE THAT THEY REMAIN SAFE."

"I can't believe he thinks we could still fall for this shite!" Sirius said as he stormed to the window. He then threw it open, breaking the wards that had been placed there. "Power!" he shouted out.

"That's all you want! MORE POWER!"

"Sirius!" Amortia and Lucius hurried over and pulled Sirius away from the window just as an Auror under Dumbledore's control sent a blasting curse at him and exploded the window. Hermione gasped when she was hit with flying debris. Amortia hurried over to her.
"A piece of glass in your cheek. Hold still, love." The Healer extracted the piece of glass and healed the shallow wound. After the explosion, Severus quickly repaired the window and sealed it shut.

"Moron!" the Potions Master shouted at Sirius. "Utter imbecile!" Sirius opened his mouth to explain, but then they all heard a voice that had scared each of them a time or two.

"ALBUS DUMBLEDORE! JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DOING?" Molly Weasley's voice carried all the way up to the tower room and she wasn't even using the Sonorus spell. "YOU CAN'T INTERRUPT AN INHERITANCE! IT'S AGAINST WIZARDING LAW, AS YOU WELL KNOW!"

Lucius crept up to the window and looked out, and then he started to laugh. He began laughing so hard he had to clutch at his sides. Hermione was flabbergasted. She'd never seen Lucius Malfoy laugh before in utter hysterics.

"She doesn't do things by half! Merlin, she's brought an army of Auror's. Including Shacklebolt. He doesn't look happy with Dumbledore at all."

Severus sidled up and peered out as well. "Yes, but after this is over, how do we escape from the army of Aurors?"

"Fred, George, and Charlie may give us a distraction to get away," Hermione offered, standing back from the window. She didn't fancy getting more glass impaled into her skin.

"That will not work a second time. Too many people now," he replied. Hermione thought he was right, but she knew that they might have more help if her message was received kindly.

Another hour passed. The twins and Charlie arrived, but they couldn't do much as the house was sealed tight, so Fred and George spent their time annoying the Aurors with their pranks. Most of the time they just ran away from the Aurors who had fallen victims to their fun. Charlie spent his time speaking to his mother and Shacklebolt trying to convince both of them that Harry and Draco were safer away from Dumbledore and that no one in the house had any intention of causing any harm.

Hermione sat on the floor near where Harry and Draco were hovering. She was very tired and her spot on the floor was uncomfortable. She looked at the raised king size bed in longing. There were two reasons why she refused to go lay there like Sirius, and even Severus had suggested.

The first was because Severus suggested it, and she knew that was immature, but it was two a.m. and her head was groggy from all the alcohol she consumed earlier, so she really wasn't concerned about how she was acting. And the second reason why she refused the bed was because it was obvious Harry and Draco had used it just before the Inheritance started, and…. she just wasn't going to go there.

"Dumbledore's gone," Sirius said from his position by the window. "Molly's still waiting; Kingsley and his men as well. We don't have to fight Dumbledore but we may have to fight the Aurors."

"I don't think I can do that. I don't think I can attack Aurors," Hermione said.

"You will not need to," Lucius said to her. He was firmly planted in a very nice plush chair that he found in a corner of the room and refused to give it up for either Amortia or Hermione. "You can be on the defensive. Cover us while we make a break for it. And I wouldn't be so quick to think Dumbledore is gone," he said to Sirius. "He's not going to give up. He needs Harry and Draco out of the way before they can get to Hogwarts. It will not be so easy to deal with them there. Time is slipping away from him."
Hermione nodded, but wasn't entirely reassured. The prospect of having to defend herself against trained Aurors was daunting. Then again, these were Aurors, not Death Eaters. The Aurors will probably only use stunning spells against them. She saw Severus bend down to say something in Lucius' ear, and the blond man nodded. Hermione frowned. The Aurors would not shoot stunners at Lucius Malfoy, that was certain, and they probably wouldn't be very kind to Severus either, as no one really ever trusted him. So now she sat there stewing in more worry.

Another hour and half passed and everyone was still and quiet. Hermione was lightly dozing on a cot she transfigured after remembering she was a witch and could do that. She sat up and was immediately alert when someone made a hissing noise. All three Death Eaters were gripping their arms.

Hermione gasped and stood up quickly, grinning. "Does that mean he's here? I sent him a message, but I wasn't sure if he would want to help." She ran over to the window and looked out, hoping her actions wouldn't end up leaving people harmed.

"Does that mean who's here?" Lucius asked curiously.

"I sent a message to…" Hermione turned when the wards trembled and the door opened. "Oh, you came! I wasn't sure you'd even take my message!"

Voldemort glided into the room and shut the door behind him. Did he come alone? Hermione wondered. Amortia, Severus, and Lucius immediately lowered to one knee to bow to their Dark Lord.

"Of course I would take your message, Miss. Granger. It sounded most urgent."

"It is sir!" Hermione hurried forward towards the Dark Lord, much to everyone's surprise. Sirius jumped forward before she could get any closer to Voldemort and pulled Hermione back.

"Hermione," he spoke slowly so she could understand every word. "That is You-Know-Who. As in Lord Voldemort. What in the hell do you think you're doing looking happy to see him?"

"But he came to help." Hermione peered around Sirius' tall form and looked at Voldemort. "You did come to help, didn't you?"

"Of course. I have a vested interest in these young wizards' health and it would do me no good if my partners are in harm's way."

Hermione nodded and moved around to stand beside the Dark Lord while he inspected the softly glowing *Ukatae*.

"Why doesn't she have to bow to him?" Lucius whispered to Severus. He didn't get an answer, as his friend was too busy staring stupefied at Hermione and the Dark Lord as they discussed Harry and Draco's condition. Sirius was in a state of shock.

"Thank you for telling me about the *Ukatae*. I would never have found it otherwise."

"I assumed as much. Your educations are sadly lacking these days."

"Mr. Malfoy has given me permission to study his Dark Art books," she said. She nearly shuddered at the astonishment of the moment. She was having a pleasant conversation with Voldemort.

"It is good that you are keeping an open mind, Miss. Granger."
Hermione nodded, and looked up at the hooded figure. "You as well, sir." Voldemort nodded that he understood her meaning and then they went back to looking at Harry and Draco's forms.

"Well this is just… Mental! I'm going mad—more so since Azkaban wasn't exactly kind to me—Hermione Granger called on You-Know-Who for help! This is insane!" Sirius was pacing back and forth, his hands permanently planted in his hair. "And what do you mean partners?" he shouted as he spun back around.

"Go calm him down before I kill him," Severus said to Lucius before moving to hover near Hermione since she insisted standing next to the Dark Lord. It wasn't that he didn't trust Voldemort with the muggleborn… He just didn't trust the Dark Lord.

Lucius cornered Sirius and pressed him into a corner. "Calm down and listen. The Dark Lord, Harry, and Draco made an alliance and they each took a Wizarding Oath." Sirius' mouth dropped open. "Yes, they are partners now. Hermione was smart to call him here. His power has grown and he can help us get away from the Aurors and Dumbledore. He needs Harry and Draco so he will use all of his considerable power to help keep them safe. Understand now, Siri?"

It took a moment for the Animagus to get over the shock and pick his bottom lip off the floor. "Yeah, I got it." Sirius tried moving away because Lucius was pressing against him but his back was pressed solidly to the wall already. "You don't have to stand so close."

"But I want to," Lucius replied and shifted against the Gryffindor. Sirius gripped Lucius' hips to keep the other man from moving and enticing him further.

"I… hum. Er… help?" Sirius was looking around for someone to help him, but no one was paying attention. Just when he was about to despair because Lucius didn't look like he planned to move, someone knocked on the door. Lucius moved away and four wands were immediately pointed at the door. Hermione and Voldemort were the only ones to keep their wands tucked away.

"Hello?" there was another knock on the door. Hermione recognized the voice as Molly Weasley's. "I've brought you all some food and pumpkin juice. Hello? I promise I'm alone. I don't want anything to happen to Harry or Draco, and Kingsley is keeping Dumbledore away."

"I don't think we should trust her," Lucius said.

"Don't be ridiculous," Severus said. "Molly loves Harry. He's practically her son."

"I think we should let her in," Hermione said, then she looked at Voldemort. "Sir?"

"By all means, let's make a party of it."

Hermione's eyes went wide. Voldemort sounded amused. "Are you having fun, sir?"

"I am, Miss Granger. Besides, she can do no harm. I set personal wards and boundaries around the house. No one who intends to cause harm to any here will be able to pass those wards."

"Wonderful! I'll go and let her in then," Hermione said as she approached the door. But just before she opened it, she turned back to look at the Dark Lord. "Oh and sir?" he nodded for her to continue. "Try not to scare her."

"I will do my best, Miss Granger."

"I think I'm dying from shock," Sirius muttered as Hermione unlocked the door and quickly went out into the hall.
"Mrs. Weasley. I'm so glad to see you. Thank you so much for bringing the Aurors. I don't know what would have happened if Dumbledore was able to get to Harry and Draco."

"It's alright, love. Many of us have begun to see the error of our ways." Molly smiled then gave the young witch a hug. "I'm very happy to see you're well."

"Oh, yes. Very well."

"That's good then. Shall we go in? I'm anxious to see how the boys are doing." Molly began to bend down to pick up the parcels of food and drink she'd brought and Hermione bent down to help. There looked to be enough food to feed all of them in the room, plus the Aurors outside with food left to spare.

"Mrs. Weasley? Before we go in, I think it's only fair that I warn you...."

"What is it? Has something happened to Harry?"

"No I think Harry will be fine. They are still going through the transformations."

"Transformations? What do you mean?"

Hermione looked at the Weasley matriarch oddly, and then her eyes narrowed. "Were you not told about Harry and Draco's bond?"

"Certainly. We heard they bonded themselves."

"No, Mrs. Weasley. Fate bonded them. They are soul mates, and that is what their bond is. They have a Magical Creature Soul Mate bond. They are turning into rare magical beings."


"He's lying then. But you can come in and see for yourself. What I wanted to warn you about is that we have some Death Eaters inside and...." Hermione took a deep breath and was prepared to cover her ears in case Molly decided to use her outside voice again. "And Voldemort is here as well."

"WHAT?"

"But not to worry! He's on our side. Well...more like we're on his side... or something like that. It's complicated right now. Not everything has been clarified." She placed her hand on Molly's back because the older witch looked like she may faint. "Just know that you are not in danger from him. I promise. I've been speaking to Voldemort. He's not so bad now that he has regained his mind. Come in and see." And before Molly could object, Hermione gently pushed her into the room and locked the door behind her once she'd followed.

Molly was rooted to the spot just inside the door. Hermione smiled reassuringly to her as she passed. Sirius hurried over and wrapped a reassuring arm around Molly and led her over to the boys who were still surrounded by a soft green glow. When she was close enough, Molly gasped.

"As I live and breathe. I never thought I would ever see a real *Ukatae*! This is just amazing!" Molly had the beginnings of tears in her eyes. "Oh, just look how beautiful they are."

"You are aware of the *Ukatae*, Mrs. Weasley? This surprises me," Voldemort said from a few feet away.
Molly turned towards his voice with a hard stare and swallowed her fear. "Why? Because I chose to stay home and raise my children? Do you think mothers like me have no intelligence?"

"No, I-"

"Do you know how hard it is to raise children? When they come home, my children continue to learn. An intelligent mind is important and I know that!"

"I was only-"

"When I was at Hogwarts I was at the top of my class! I probably know things you couldn't even imagine, Mr. Dark Lord! I'll have you know I wrote a twenty foot essay on ancient magical beings and received top marks!"

Voldemort remained silent, as did everyone else. Everyone except the two speaking were having a hard time trying to keep from laughing at the absurdity of having Molly Weasley berating Voldemort as if he were one of her own children. Even Voldemort didn't know how to react. He'd never had a mother so this was a new experience for him. He didn't have any ill feelings towards the woman, which was strange. A month ago he wouldn't have hesitated to kill the witch for her impudence. But now all he felt was confusion and a fear that if he began to speak again, the berating would continue and he would rather have his ears boxed.

"Madam, I assure you. I was not implying that you lacked intelligence. I was merely surprised. Not many people know about the Ukatae because they are harshly secretive and are reported to be nearly extinct. There are only a few in number left. . . ." He stopped when Mrs. Weasley pinned him with a stare that made him want to step back.

"Are you really You-Know-Who?" she asked him, walking a few steps closer until they were nearly toe-to-toe.

"Molly, what are you doing?" Sirius hissed. "What is wrong with Gryffindor witches these days? Why must you get so close to him?"

"Yes, I am Lord Voldemort."

"Well then..." Molly took a very deep breath before releasing it. "Shame on you! Do you know how hard it is to keep all my children safe from you and your followers? I've nearly had several mental breakdowns, I've been worried so much about my family! And now Ginny insists on staying with Harry and Draco at Malfoy Manor where I know you reside, despite what Charlie and Severus tried to tell me." Here she sent Severus a quelling stare.

"We have been safe, Mrs. Weasley," Hermione said as she went about setting up a table for all the food and drink. "By the way, do you still have that essay? I would very much like to read it."

"Of course, dear! I'll owl it to you tomorrow." Molly nodded to Voldemort then went over to help Hermione.

"Severus."

Severus came to stand beside Voldemort. "My Lord?"

"That was very disconcerting. Is she always like that?"

"Ah, yes. She rules her family with an iron fist."
"That's wrong, Severus," Molly said, having heard the exchange. "It's with an iron skillet!"

Hermione snickered and ignored the look Severus gave her. Amortia, who was keeping a constant eye on the boys, suddenly rose from her position on the ground near them. "The transformations are over," she announced.

Everyone turned to look just in time to see the green glow disappear. A moment later, Harry and Draco were lowered to the ground. Harry lay perfectly still and his eyes were closed; he didn't look like he was breathing. Draco's eyes closed briefly but it appeared he would wake soon because his eyelids began to flicker.

"Amortia, check Harry now," Severus said, his concern evident in the trembling of his voice. Amortia had just begun to bend over Harry when Draco's eyes popped open and they immediately zeroed in on the witch hovering over his mate. In a move so quick that no normal person could have possibly managed, Draco was on his feet with Amortia's robes gripped tightly in his clawed hands. He lifted her a good three feet off the ground and snarled in her face, displaying those sharp fangs.

"Everyone remain calm," she said softly, staring into swirling silver eyes that hardly resembled Draco's anymore. "He's only protecting his mate."

"But we need to see if Harry is alright," Hermione whispered.

Amortia shook her head slightly. "You do not want to agitate him. He's capable of slaughtering us all in the blink of an eye and he will do so if he thinks we're trying to harm his mate… Draco," the Healer said quietly, in a soothing voice. "May I see your mate? I just want to check to make sure he's all right. I promise I mean him no harm."

"Do not touch him," he growled. "No one touches him. He's mine."

"Yes, Harry is yours. He belongs to you. But Draco, we need to make sure he has survived his Inheritance," Amortia replied in a calm manner that she certainly did not feel. Amortia could feel the danger pouring off the Slytherin in waves and a person would have to be brain dead to not feel the slightest bit of fear. The Ukatae were deadly when they wanted to be and that danger did not come from a wand.

"Draco, please." Hermione stepped into Draco's line of vision slowly, and his silver eyes followed her every movement. "Draco, you know me right? You know I wouldn't do anything to hurt your Harry. But he's my friend too and I want to make sure he's okay." It was a moment before Draco reacted, but slowly he lowered Amortia to the ground. Hermione smiled and moved to place a reassuring hand on Draco's arm. "Can we check him?"

Draco's eyes reverted back to normal. "Hermione?" the blond stumbled back as he got control of himself. He would have fallen had Lucius and Sirius not been there to catch him. "Please make sure he's okay."

Amortia nodded and began her tests. Hermione moved over to sit beside Draco and drew the blond into her arms so that he was leaning back against her chest.

"Draco, how do you feel?"

"I feel different. My body aches and my head is heavy."

"That's probably because you've grown several inches and your hair has grown down to your calves," Severus said as he knelt in front of him.
"What?"

"Here, look," Hermione pushed him a little away so that she could gather his hair, and oh! How soft it was! She moved his hair over his shoulder and he took it, staring at it in horror.

"But it's too long! I can't wear my hair like this! I'll be a laughing stock!"

Several people in the room rolled their eyes.

"Calm down. It can be cut," Severus pulled some potions from his robes and handed them to Draco before moving over to Harry. He stopped two feet short when Draco began to growl again. "I'm not going to touch him. Amortia?"

"He's alive. He's merely sleeping. His body probably needs to rest; recuperate from the Inheritance and transformation. You saved his life Draco."

"Of course I did. I told him I would. He's mine to save while he saves all your arses. Now step away from him." Draco moved over to Harry and scooped him up into his arms and then carried his mate bridal style to the bed. He waved a hand, and the bed was cleaned and remade.

"He did wandless magic without breaking a sweat," Sirius murmured. "I've only seen Harry do that but he'd always had to concentrate first..."

"The Ukatae are very powerful, Sirius. Dark elves do not need to use wands," Molly said as she watched Draco lovingly tuck Harry into bed before climbing in beside him. "Their magic is more like mage magic."

"Hermione, do you have that book with you?" Draco asked.

"Of course. I always take books with me when I plan to attend a party." She was being sarcastic but most of the people in the room looked as if they thought she did exactly that. "Oh come on! I'm not that bad!"

"Fine then, come over here and tell me about what we are."

"Looks like we're going to be here longer than we'd hoped. Draco will not be taking any chances with Harry. He'll keep him here until he is sure Harry is completely well," Voldemort said. They all began to gather around the bed so that Hermione, Molly, and Amortia could explain to Draco exactly what the Ukatae were. And since the others didn't know much about the Ukatae, they sat and prepared to listen. Voldemort remained a little apart and sat in the chair Lucius had forfeited.

"At least Molly brought refreshments."

"Is food all you think about, Siri?"

"Course not. I'm constantly thinking up horrible and torturous ways of killing you. It's a fun and stress relieving past time for me."
Draco lounged in his bed with his back resting against the headboard. His mate was nestled securely beside him with his head resting in Draco's lap. Draco had pulled the comforter up to Harry's neck, and splayed the long black hair over that and was currently running his fingers through it. Harry didn't look bad with long hair. It actually made him look more feminine, and though he knew Harry wouldn't like to hear it, Draco liked his new look very much. So much that he wished everyone in the room would just bugger off so that he could wake Harry by his own means. He looked up to glare at those who made that particular pleasant fantasy impossible, and that's when he realized exactly who was in the room.

"So um…Father? I see you've found my house." He had the grace to look embarrassed and somewhat apprehensive.

"Yes, indeed, Draco," Lucius replied with a dark look. "When you are well we will discuss this further."

Draco nodded; relieved he wouldn't have to deal with that right away, and kept the fact that he felt perfectly fine to himself. Then he spotted Mrs. Weasley, and was surprised to find he was actually glad to see her. "Hello, Mrs. Weasley. Are you well?"

Everyone looked surprised to hear Draco speak to Molly in such a respectful manner and they could see he was happy to see her. Molly herself looked as if he'd handed her the sun and moon. She rushed over and enfolded him in a bone-crushing hug. Again, everyone was surprised when he returned the embrace.

"Of course, love. And I'm very happy to see you and Harry are no worse for wear. I was so worried. Dumbledore thought he would get his hands on you two." She snorted. "He should have known better. No one hurts any of my children!"

"But Mrs. Weasley, I'm not…"

"Hush! Of course you are. You're Harry's mate, are you not? Of course I consider you one of mine now!"

"Mrs. Weasley…" Draco had to work very hard to keep himself from crying like a little girl. Hermione wasn't as strong and she let her tears fall unchecked, beaming at Draco and Molly. And she got a little self-satisfaction knowing that when Ron found out about this he was going to flip his lid.

"I know you wanted me to tell you about the Ukatae, but do you want me to wait until Harry can hear as well?" she asked dabbing her tears away.

Draco nodded. "In the mean time, will someone please cut my hair?"

"Come here, Draco love. I'll do it." Molly offered. "Sirius, there is a chair down the hall. Please go and get it for me."
Sirius nodded and left the room. When Draco left the bed, he noticed Voldemort sitting in the chair near the window. "What are you doing here?"

"Miss Granger had the foresight to ask for my assistance. Which you will need if everyone wants to leave here safely." Draco nodded and easily masked his surprise in hearing that Hermione willingly called upon Voldemort for help. What was the world coming to? Sirius soon returned with the chair, and Draco sat after moving the chair to where he would be able to sit and watch Harry sleeping. He wouldn't be relieved until he saw Harry's eyes open and smiling at him. Molly smiled at his actions and wrapped a sheet around Draco to keep the cut hair from getting all over his clothes. After this, she pulled out a pair of scissors instead of her wand

"Scissors, Molly?" asked Sirius with a crooked grin.

"Of course. I've learned to be prepared after having seven children. Especially when two of those thrive on causing trouble. I don't know how many times I've had to cut out sticky stuff from their hair and I prefer these to my wand. Here now, Draco. Stay still. How do you want your hair?"

"Umm…. just like before, but a little longer. Maybe so that these pointy ears can be hidden if I wish it."

"All right then. I can do that." Molly began to cut Draco's hair, taking great care with his beautiful locks as she was aware of how much Draco loved his hair, and she was honored that he would trust her with cutting it. "You have such wonderful hair, Draco!"

"Yes, Mrs. Weasley. I know." Draco didn't even try to hide his smugness, and it only made Molly laugh.

The others were completely bored and didn't want to sit around watching the Ukatae getting his hair cut. Hermione moved to stand by Amortia so she could ask the Healer some questions. Severus stood off in a corner, brooding over the past night, and was trying desperately to forget he'd ever had Hermione in his arms. It was a losing battle. Especially since she kept sending him death glares that made his heart constantly ache. Lucius was busy both glaring at his son and admiring the beauty that Draco and Harry had turned into, while Voldemort simply observed everyone. Sirius was the only one to show how truly annoyed he was to be stuck inside without anything to do, and his pacing soon got on the Dark Lord's nerves.

"Black! Sit down now!" Voldemort's voice was loud and it seemed to boom throughout the house. Immediately Sirius sat where he had stopped pacing, and scowled at the floor. Lucius snorted, but tried to mask the sound by covering his mouth with his hand. Voldemort sighed with relief at being immediately obeyed. He had begun to think he was losing his touch. It seemed Black wasn't the only one effected by his voice. Movement on the bed drew everyone's attention; Harry made a small noise and flopped over onto his stomach, his long black hair twisting around him as he turned. Draco would have jumped out of his chair, but Molly placed a firm hand on his shoulder.

"Harry's all right. He's just sleepy. Let him wake on his own."

Draco pouted and wasn't very happy with that, but he did remain seated. Everyone watched as Harry began to stretch. And then he grabbed the comforter and pulled that over his head. A moment later, they all heard a soft snore. The witches in the room began to titter.

"You see. He's fine. Back to his old self, I'd say." Molly continued to chuckle, but went silent when the form on the bed moved again.
"Mrs. Weasley? Is that you?" Harry's groggily asked from beneath the covers, followed by a loud yawn.

"Of course, dear. I had to make sure you and Draco remained safe, didn't I?"

"Oh, okay."

Everyone thought Harry had gone back to sleep after that, but a few moments later Harry flung back the covers and bolted up into a sitting position, his eyes wild with worry. "Draco!"

"Here, Harry. I'm fine." Draco began to smile at him but faltered when his mate's face turned dark with fury. Mrs. Weasley had the good sense to stop her cutting and back away from the blond, and with good reason.

Harry growled and stood up on the mattress. "You bloody idiot!" he roared.

There was no other way to describe what happened next except that Harry literally flew into the air and crashed into Draco at a phenomenal speed; knocking the chair backwards to the floor and bringing the two Ukatae down with it. Harry started pounding his fists against Draco's chest. "I told you not to touch me! You could have died! I don't want to be alone again… you almost left me alone!"

Draco was just so glad to see that Harry was all right that he laughed and grabbed Harry's wrists to keep him from causing him any more injury. Harry may be on the small side, but he was very strong and Draco knew the punches Harry was throwing at him would be leaving some horrid bruises.

"You're supposed to be a Slytherin! You're not supposed to go around helping people!" Harry was trembling by this time, his worry and fear over what Draco had done slamming into him. The realization of what could have happened, of the fact that Draco could have been lost to him made the fight leave him, and he sagged against Draco and buried his head in his mate's neck, trying to hold back the frightened tears.

"Shhh, Harry. Everything is all right." He ran his hand over Harry's hair. "I saved your arse. You should be thanking me-

Harry reared back and slapped Draco across the face, hard. "You fucking bastard!"

Draco was in such shock that he could only stare wide eyed, just as everyone else was, and watched as Harry got up and slammed out of the room. His long hair barely making it through the door before it slammed shut behind him.

"Must have been something you said, Draco," Voldemort said. He was clearly amused if the laughter ringing in his voice was any indication.

"Harry has every reason to be angry with you," Lucius said. "It's a miracle you're still alive after interfering with the Inheritance."

Draco was getting over his shock and it was quickly being replaced by anger. What the fuck? Harry had actually just slapped him across the face. As if sensing his darkening mood, Molly returned and helped him up. He didn't shake off her firm hand from his arm, as he would have with anyone else. She reached up to grasp his chin firmly in her hand and pulled it down so that he was forced to look into her understanding hazel eyes.

"Listen to me, Draco. Before you lose your temper, think about why Harry did that. Think about what your soul mate must have felt when you put yourself at risk by touching him during his
Inheritance. You know Harry. You know what he has had to go through and what he has lost. The terror he must have felt, Draco, at the thought of losing you. You are his life now. You just think about that before you go off and start a fight."

Draco had no choice but to see the reasoning behind Molly's words, and he nodded. Molly smiled and patted his cheek. "Good. Now sit back down so that I may finish cutting your hair. Severus, you bring Harry his clothes and make sure he doesn't leave."

"He's not going to leave," Draco grumbled. "He's hiding and sulking."

"Good. A good sulk never hurt anyone."

Harry pressed his face against the cool glass of the window in the room he supposed was a type of office or small study. The window faced the ocean and provided an amazing view. The sun was beginning to rise and gave enough light for him to be able to see the waves crashing against the beach.

"Bloody imbecile," he murmured and then pressed a hand to his heart and took a deep breath. His heart was still pounding. He'd been overcome by his fear at Draco's thoughtlessness.

"He was only trying to help. You would do the same. And you probably will when his birthday passes," Severus said from behind him. Harry wasn't surprised to hear his voice. He'd been able to hear his uncle's steps the moment he left the tower room, and stranger still, Harry had been able to scent him.

"Did he really save my life?"

"Yes. Amortia believes because of the way you are bonded, the Inheritance considered you and Draco one person, and distributed the rest of your power to the both of you."

"He still could have died and it would have been a worthless sacrifice. Did he forget that when one of us dies the other will follow soon after?"

"Harry, I'm sure all he was thinking about was you. What if it had been Draco who was receiving the Inheritance? Remember the pain you went through last night. Do you think you could have stood by and just watched?"

Harry sighed. "No. But I was just so scared."

"Understood." Severus gave him a small smile and handed Harry his clothes. It was then Harry finally noticed that his hair was brushing the back of his legs.

"What the..." and then he noticed he didn't have to crane his neck back so much to look in his uncle's eyes. "I got taller!"

Severus had to laugh. "Indeed you did, as did Draco."

Harry scoffed at the unfairness of it all. "That figures. He'll still be taller than me."

"Much taller than you now." Harry scoffed. "Just admit it, Harry. You like that he's taller than you."

Harry made a noncommittal sound as he slipped on his pants and remained silent until he was fully dressed. Severus had to help him pull all the hair out from under his shirt.

"Can you use your wand to cut this?"
Severus nodded. Harry pulled his hair together in a ponytail and told Severus to cut it just below his hand so that when it was cut, his hair fell down to his shoulders just as it had been before the transformation.

"How do I look?" Harry struck a pose, and then grinned when Sev snorted. "That bad?"

"On the contrary. You should find a mirror. Draco is going to become even more possessive of you now."

Harry groaned. "Really?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Dammit."

"Have you noticed any other changes?" Severus asked.

Harry nodded and turned to look out the window again. "I could smell you before you opened the door, and I can see now. My eyesight is perfect. In fact it's better than perfect."

"How do you mean?"

"I can see things clearly that are far away."

"Elaborate."

Harry pointed off towards the ocean. "There's a fishing boat dropping nets about twenty... Actually I can't be sure how far away the boat is."

"I get your meaning. It's far, as I can't see anything but water."

"There are five crewmen..." Harry shook his head and narrowed his eyes. "No. Six. There are six crewmen, and right now two of those men are in an argument, and the captain is yelling at them to get back to work. Or at least I think that's what he's saying. He's waving at them and pointing at the other crew members who are working with the nets."

"That's impressive."

"It's really weird to be able to see this well after having to wear glasses my whole life."

"Give it time. You'll get used to it. It's a useful ability."

Harry agreed. "As is the ability to jump long distances. I think it will be fun to learn what other abilities Draco and I have."

Severus nodded. Harry continued to stare out of the window, making no indication that he would speak again or that he was prepared to leave the room.

"Will you return to the room now? I'm sure Hermione is anxious to impart to you the information she's learned about your kind."

Harry nodded, and then he looked embarrassed. "I hit Draco pretty hard, didn't I?"

"Yes, but we all understand why you were angry."

"He must be really angry with me. That's something else too. When the Inheritance started, we lost
the ability to feel each other's emotions. I mean we still have that innate intuition of overall well being or distress, but we lost the ability to really feel every single emotion as if it were our own."

Severus studied his nephew for a moment. "You are not bothered by the fact you can't feel each other anymore?"

"No," Here Harry blushed. "I'm guessing it's because we completed the bond last night. And we know each other well enough that we don't need to be able to feel the others emotions. It's enough that I can see how much he loves me when he looks at me."

"Can you still speak to each other wordlessly?"

*Draco?*

*What?*

Harry winced at the cold tone. "Yes. We can still talk that way. I'm glad for that. I think I would have missed it."

Harry and Severus left the study and made their way upstairs to the tower room. When he entered the room, Harry tried very hard to hide his embarrassment from everybody. He saw Mrs. Weasley had finished cutting Draco's hair and it was back to being the way it was. Perfect as always. A stark contrast to Harry's unruly black hair. Draco's hair was just long enough that it covered his ears, the back of his neck, with strands hanging over his eyes. Harry thought it was a shame he hadn't been able to play with Draco's long hair before it was cut. Oh well. Maybe he would try to convince Draco to let it grow just a bit longer. His fingers already itched to be buried in that hair. Before he could travel further into the room, Draco moved in a blur and pushed him back out into the hall, firmly shutting the door behind them.

"They move fast now," Hermione said. "I barely saw Draco move at all."

"The same for Harry when he jumped from the bed half way across the room," Sirius put in.

"And Draco told me he jumped off his balcony at Malfoy Manor. It was thirty feet and he said it only felt like five feet. It's like they have super powers."

"Well they basically do," Amortia put in.

"And that is why Dumbledore must not be allowed to exploit their powers," Voldemort spoke.

"Like they would let that happen."

"There could be ways for him to control them before they even knew what was happening. All Dumbledore would need to do is trap one of them in some way, and he'd have the other in his fist," Lucius said from his position against the wall.

"Then what do we do when school starts?"

"I will be watching them. Dumbledore has tried to oust me from my position as the Potions professor. However, Lucius and the other members of the Governing Board of Hogwarts have the last say. I will not be so easily turned away."

"A shame, really," Hermione murmured lowly, but all heard her.

"Hermione! You should show more respect," Molly chided.
"I would if he would."

Voldemort started laughing, catching everyone off guard and making Severus forget about the reply he had for the impertinent witch. "Miss Granger, come sit with me. No Severus. You stay over there. Miss Granger looks as if she wants nothing to do with you at the moment."

Hermione flushed but did move to sit next to the Dark Lord, wondering why he wanted her near him. "Sir?"

"Have you ever practiced the Dark Arts, Miss Granger?"

"I wouldn't dare venture into that avenue of study without a competent teacher. Though I have asked Mr. Malfoy if I could look over the Dark Arts books he has at Malfoy Manor."

"If you found a suitable instructor, would you want to learn?"

"Of course. Even though it's the Dark Arts, it is still knowledge, and as the saying goes, knowledge is power."

Voldemort raised his hands and began to clap. "Bravo. Well said. If you so wish, you will have your teacher." Hermione took a deep breath and then began firing out questions.

Harry and Draco faced one another in the hallway, both trying to intimidate by staring each other down with blank faces. Draco was succeeding, as he had more practice with that cold mask of his.

"I'm not going to apologize," Harry finally said, and crossed his arms over his chest.

"Neither am I."

"Didn't expect you to." There was more silence. "This is stupid. You're pouting on the inside, aren't you?" Harry had to grin when Draco narrowed his eyes on him. Yep, the Slytherin git was pouting. "Why'd you drag me out here if you have nothing to say? I'm ready to hear what Hermione has to tell us." Harry reached out to brush his fingers along Draco's exposed chest. Since the buttons were lying everywhere, Draco hadn't been able to close his shirt. Which suited Harry just fine. Draco's eyes darkened when Harry touched him.

"I wanted a moment alone with you."

"Well, here we are. All alone. And you've had your moment so let's go back in." Harry prepared to turn, but was stopped when Draco put a restraining hand on his shoulder and squeezed.

"Harry...I had to do it," Draco spoke quietly, and Harry realized Draco was nervous, and was that a blush Harry saw?

"Okay. I understand. I would have done the same thing. But I'm still not sorry for hitting you."

"That's fair." Draco lightly grasped Harry's chin and touched their lips together. "You aren't sore, are you?"

Harry pulled away and ducked his head to hide the blush. He knew exactly what Draco was referring to. "No. I feel fine, actually."

Again, Draco had to mentally say hooray for the healing powers of a soul mate bond. Because there was no way he was going to wait very long to have Harry in bed again. Just the thought was causing Draco to display, and he could feel his fangs coming in. Harry looked up and grinned. "No, Draco.
Calm down."

"But I don't want to."

Harry tried to give his lover a stern look, but it wasn't happening like he wanted. Draco was looking fucking hot at the moment. "You can't resist me, Harry. You never could." Draco stalked Harry back against the wall until all the Gryffindor could see or smell was the blond. Harry tried. He really did. But apparently Draco was right.

Draco soon found his arms full of a hot-blooded, completely turned on Ukatae, whose teeth were nipping at his lips demanding entrance. Draco briefly wondered why it was that every time they kissed, Harry's taste seemed to get sweeter, just a little more addicting. He started to unbuckle Harry's pants when the door opened behind him, and there was a small gasp. "Oh my!" Amortia exclaimed.

"Draco! Harry! Stop this instant!" Molly came charging out and pulled Draco away from Harry.

"Mrs. Weasley, that's not entirely safe…" Amortia began, but shut up when Draco looked at Molly and hissed while Harry pinned them with a virulent gaze and began to growl. Amortia's respect for the older witch grew when Molly pulled a long wooden spoon out of nowhere and bopped both Ukatae on the head with it. Effectively brining them out of the lust filled state and into their right senses.

"You two better watch it!" Molly planted her hands on her hips, with the wooden spoon still gripped tightly in one hand. "Don't think just because you've turned into dark elves that you can get away with anything. You can't. Not while I'm around. And Harry, you should know that by now!"

"Sorry, Mrs. Weasley," Harry muttered, rubbing the spot on the top of his head where she had hit him. He would swear that spoon only looked wooden, but was in fact steel.

"Into the room. NOW!"

Harry and Draco rushed into the room, making a wide berth around the witch. Amortia touched Mrs. Weasley's arm. "And I thought my techniques were good. You're wonderful, Mrs. Weasley! And the way you handled the Dark Lord…absolutely brilliant!"

Molly flushed. "Thank you. I presume that means you are a Death Eater?" Amortia nodded, but said no more about it. Which suited Molly just fine.

"Hermione!" Harry ran over and hid behind her chair. "She beat me over the head again."

"It's your own fault for not controlling yourself," She said to him. Harry huffed and bent down so that his chin rested on her shoulder.

"How do you expect me to control myself? Just look at him, Hermione. Draco's fucking gorgeous! He's like this tall blond Elven god…" Harry stared off across the room where his lover stood with his father and Severus. They seemed to be in a deep discussion about something.

"Well I'm glad you've found your god to lavish yourself all over," she replied bitterly. Harry raised an eyebrow then turned to Voldemort.

"Can't you do something about my stupid uncle, Tom? I don't like a bitter Hermione. She tends to be quite violent when she's angry or bitter."

"Really? How violent?" Voldemort leaned forward, obviously intrigued and willing to listen to any stories that portrayed Hermione in a less than stellar light.
"I doubt I get as violent as you hope, sir."

"She lies. She sent the twins to St. Mungo's once and they had to stay there for three days."

"They didn't have to stay there for three days..." Hermione began as if she had already explained it a hundred times.

"No, they only stayed there to keep away from you until your temper had died down. I'm not making this up, Tom. She's vicious. So do us all a favor and curse some sense into Sev's head."

"No!" Hermione yelled and jumped from her seat. All other conversation stopped, and heads turned their way. "There is no need for any cursing," she hissed quietly to Harry.

"Miss. Granger, I find myself being surprised by you at every turn."

"Everyone thinks she's miss goody two shoes, but they are so wrong..."

"So, can I tell you and Draco about the Ukatae now?" Hermione asked a little too loudly.

Knowing that Hermione was on the verge of cursing him, Harry quickly nodded and soon he and Draco were sitting down and Hermione began her Ukatae history lesson.

"A thousand years ago the Ukatae population rivaled that of both the muggle and Wizarding populations put together. They were very powerful and thrived on the chaos the muggles spread across the earth. During that time, the Ukatae made their kingdoms deep within dangerous territories to keep muggle and Wizarding folk from discovering where they came from...Usually they inhabited jungles, ancient magical forests, and mountains.

"The Ukatae are able to change their appearances so that they can walk amongst the muggles and wizards without being detected and gather more power. They thrive on power...then, about five hundred years ago, the Ukatae fell into civil war. They fought over the dominance of the entire world. The Ukatae population consisted of many clans and one royal clan governed them all. The fighting broke out when the royal family refused to allow the clans to enslave all those who were not Ukatae, and an uprising took place soon after that. The first of many battles saw the entire royal family slaughtered. Every last drop of royal blood had been spilt and soaked into the ground; the killing hasn't ended. Without rulers, there is no law and so the civil wars supposedly continue. That war brought about the destruction of a great empire and that is why today there aren't many left. In fact, some believe they are extinct." Hermione paused to take a breath and to make sure she hadn't lost her audience's attention. She hadn't.

"That's all the history that was written. Bits and pieces really. Clearly there is much history left out. The book I found had plenty to say about your kind, but nothing that has been proven true. Oh! It did say that not only can you disguise yourself as human, but you two are supposedly natural Animagus."

"What about the blood drinking?" Sirius asked. "How come they drink blood if they are not vampires?"

"The Ukatae drink blood occasionally because blood is very powerful on its own, being a natural life force. It's as natural for them to drink blood as it is for vampires, except the Ukatae have the advantage of being alive and drinking a person's blood is always a choice."

"Did the book say where the Ukatae reside now?" Lucius asked.

"No. No one knows where the Ukatae live now. In fact, no one has seen a Ukatae in over a hundred
years. It's been speculated that after the war, the remaining Ukatae gathered up their remaining powers and created a portal so that they could live in another dimension. I'm not sure I believe that."

"Another dimension? That sounds a little far fetched."

"And so does the fact that there are real elves living among us, Mr. Malfoy."

"Is that all?" Draco asked. Hermione shook her head.

"It mentions the Ukatae all displayed certain characteristics of the animals they could become, as well as the abilities the both of you have already seen. It also said the Ukatae learn about their power and abilities by a natural instinct. Here Harry started to nod. He'd already experienced the natural instinct part.

"Like I said, the book holds little factual information. The parts about the Ukatae are mostly speculations and I don't feel it necessary to tell you about those things. I'll get the book for you if you feel like reading it yourselves. Does anyone else have anything to add?" Everyone except Voldemort shook their heads.

"If there are more Ukatae out there they will probably seek you two out at some point. They will be drawn to your power," the Dark Lord added.

"I suppose we'll have to try and find more information," Harry finally said to Draco.

"I'm afraid there isn't any more information," Molly stated. "I searched for months when I was doing that essay. You won't find any information because the Ukatae are dark creatures and they value their privacy. They like their secrets to remain secrets, and would not allow the world at large to know more than what we already know. Let's hope there is more of your kind and they do find you, otherwise you might not learn anything else."

"I bet you don't like that, Hermione. Not knowing more. Must be killing you," Draco teased with a cheeky grin.

"I'm not going to give up. I'll keep looking."

Harry flopped back onto the bed and stared at the ceiling, his brows were drawn together and a frown marred his lovely face. He wasn't thrilled to know there wasn't much information about the Ukatae, but he supposed he shouldn't worry as the Ukatae instincts had already begun to manifest and he was already learning things as if there was a teacher inside his head. For instance, he knew the reason why his back was itching was because he was the submissive, which meant he would be growing some sort of wings in the next couple of months; he wasn't at all pleased with that knowledge. Having wings was just one more thing to make him stand out more, to make him more of a freak.

He made sure to keep that last thought entirely to himself, as he was sure Draco would mentally slap him if he were to hear it. Harry supposed worrying about the wings was pointless as well. It was going to happen whether he wanted it to or not. On a brighter note, he was beginning to develop a plan on how to get Tom's body back to him; his mind was being filled with knowledge of the natural world that he knew no wizards or muggles knew about.

Harry sat up. "It's time to get out of here. And when we get home, into the Pensieve we go."

"How do you suggest we leave? Have you forgotten about the Aurors?" Severus asked.

"Not to worry. Leave them to me, Draco?"
"Right. Everyone follow me. And try to stay quiet when we get outside." Draco caressed Harry's cheek as he rose from beside him, passing his thumb over Harry's lips.

"You sure you'll be alright, Harry? Maybe I should stay with you." Hermione asked as the rest of their group left, leaving herself, Harry, and Voldemort alone in the room.

"Don't worry, Mione. I'll be fine. I'll see you at Malfoy Manor in a few minutes. Now hurry up. Draco will not be able to hold the circle for very long."

"What circle?"

Harry grinned at her. "You'll see." Hermione sighed, but did as he said and hurried after Draco and the others.

"It seems my help wasn't needed after all. A shame."

"I'm sure." Harry replied to the Dark wizard who came to stand beside him. "But at least you'll be getting a better body very soon. You must be excited about that, Tom."

"How do you plan to do that?" Voldemort asked in barely restrained eagerness.

"It's fairly simple, really. At least it is for Draco and me, and with your help. Tell me Tom, if I could give you a second chance at life, would you take it?"

"I suppose that all depends on what you mean by a second chance," Voldemort replied thoughtfully as they left the tower room. He was surprised when Harry grinned at him, and the young Gryffindor's grin was wicked.

"I'm talking about taking over the Wizarding world, Tom. I assume you still had that goal in mind. Draco and I do. But what if you could do it right this time? Instead of trying to take it by brute force, perhaps trying it the Slytherin way would be better. By cunning and scheming. Making it happen before anyone knew what was happening."

"You've thought about this a lot haven't you?"

"Oh yes. I had plenty of time to think about it when you entrapped me within my own mind."

"Then my answer is yes. A second chance at life does sound appealing."

"Excellent."

Harry paused just inside the front door. From somewhere behind him, he heard a door creak open, and then footsteps coming towards him. He wasn't worried. He knew it was someone from their group. And a moment later, he smelt the unmistakable scent of Mrs. Weasley. She always smelt like home cooking. It was a pleasant scent that he allowed to wash over him.

"Harry dear, Draco is waiting for you to go outside before he does whatever it is he's going to do." Molly said as she came up beside him. "I thought it would be better to come with you. If I don't return, it may cause you more problems, as Kingsley might think something has happened to me."

"You're right. Thanks. I never thought of that."

"What are you going to do, love? You aren't going to hurt anyone, are you?"

"Not unless they provoke me. Severus told me that Charlie, Fred, and George were here. Are they still?"
"No I sent them home when it became apparent Fred and George would do more bad than good if they remained here." Harry nodded, relieved that his friends wouldn't be out there. Because he was unsure of what he would have to do, and he didn't want those three hurt. "Harry, I've seen many things in my life, and have known many people who've had a lot of power. I trust you know what you're doing and hope you make the right choices in regards to how you treat people."

"Again, it all depends on how I'm treated. I'm not afraid to throw my power around and I won't feel guilty if someone gets hurt if I feel threatened."

"Well that's definitely not something the old Harry would have said."

"The old Harry is dead. I'm tired of caring what other people think of me, always going around walking on eggshells. It should be the other way round as far as I'm concerned." Without waiting for a reply, and not really caring what Mrs. Weasley thought of that, he opened the door and stepped out into the early morning light. Immediately dozens of wands were aimed at him. He smiled coldly and waved his hand. The wind whipped around them, and all the wands were pulled out of hands and thrown several feet away from their owners.

"Morning!" Harry called cheerfully, and basked in the alarm flowing around him coming from the shocked Aurors as they scrambled to pick up their wands. "Really, I thought Aurors were trained better. To allow their wands to be taken from their hands by the wind. Pathetic."

"That was no natural wind!" someone yelled out.

"Of course it was," Harry said, not sparing a look to the Auror who spoke, keeping his eyes firmly locked on Kingsley.

"Harry. You look well."

"I am. And thank you for keeping Dumbledore away."

"He knew better then to mess with an Inheritance."

"Did you arrest him?" Molly asked. Her tone suggested his answer better be yes.

"No, Molly. As he was stopped before getting to Harry he didn't actually break the law."

"But-" Molly began, clearly ready to argue.

"However, I did have him brought in for questioning. Something to make sure he couldn't return here before your Inheritance was over."

"And why are you still here?" Harry asked, and didn't let on that he noticed four Aurors creeping around the house to the back. *Draco, Aurors on their way back to you.*

_How many?_

_I see four. Could be more though._

"Honestly I wanted to make sure you were alright. Never seen the light of an Inheritance that bright before."

"I'm touched." Though he didn't sound it at all. *Draco?*

_Six of them. Stunned now. I'm starting the circle._
I'll keep the rest occupied until you leave. "As you can see, I'm well. So why are you still here, and why do you have the house surrounded?"

Kingsley pinned Harry with a hard stare. "Playing dumb does not become you, Harry. You have Death Eaters in that house-

"What's the difference between now and the day Moody dropped that wall on me? It's the same people and you let them go before…STOP!" Harry had caught more movement out of the corner of his eye, counting four more Aurors trying to go around to the back. Immediately the Aurors froze and were unable to move. Another Auror came running from the back of the house. Apparently Draco had missed one.

"Something is going on back there! They're escaping!" the Auror yelled. Kingsley waved his hand, and his remaining Aurors prepared to go to the back. Harry grinned and clapped his hands together. The sound seemed to carry on for miles and the ground started to shake, causing the Aurors who weren't immobilized to stop what they were doing at stare at Harry. Suddenly, great thick vines began to shoot up from the ground, twisting and coiling, becoming an impenetrable wall that blocked the Aurors from going to the back where Draco had drawn up the transport circle.

"That's very impressive, Harry," the black Auror said, and then he raised his wand to point at Harry. "I suggest you lower the wall, else I'll bring you in for obstruction."

Harry, come home. We're safe.

"Mrs. Weasley." Harry nodded to Molly in goodbye, and the smile in her eyes was goodbye enough for him. Kingsley opened his mouth to stupefy Harry, but before he could utter a sound, the air cracked around them and Harry was gone. At once the vines shrunk back into the ground and the stunned wizards were automatically revived.

Kingsley frowned at the spot where Harry had been standing. "I don't know who we should be more worried about now. You-Know-Who or Harry."

"Perhaps you are looking in the wrong direction altogether," Molly said, then turned and began to walk down the drive until she passed the barrier keeping people from Apparating. She marveled at the power Harry had just shown as if it had been nothing. As if it all had been as easy as simply breathing. Shaking her head in wonder, Molly Apparated back to the Burrow and prepared to tell Arthur the extraordinary events of the past night.

Harry Apparated directly into Draco's room and headed straight for the shower. His muscles were killing him and he felt dirty, and knew some time under the hot steamy water would do him good. He briefly thought about calling Draco to him, but he knew how that would end up, and even though that thought left him with a smile, he decided against it. He wanted to get the viewing of the Pensieve memories out of the way before doing anything else. Well except his shower, of course. He used that alone time to prepare himself for what he was going to see. He knew he had to be strong and to remember that he would be looking at a memory. And that whatever happened, happened a long time ago and that there was nothing he could do to stop it from happening.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the manor, Sirius was brooding in his room, and trying to decide whether to return home that night or the following night. In the end he decided tomorrow would be better as Harry would need his support after viewing the memories. Sirius decided against viewing the memories himself, as he didn't think he could handle watching the murders of his best friends. It would very likely send him over the edge and he would probably end up doing something stupid like rushing right out to exact his revenge and end up getting carted off to Azkaban. Again.
When he heard his door opening, he looked up with a scowl, prepared to scare away anyone who dared disturb his brooding peace, and cursed fluently when Lucius walked in as if he owned the place—which he did, but still! Couldn’t a wizard get one moment of peace around here? Apparently not, for Lucius walked right up to him, grabbed him by the collar and smashed his lips against his. Sirius resisted for a good five seconds before his brain shut down and his tongue rushed in to plunder Lucius’ mouth.

Sirius felt his head spin. It was like they were kids again, wrapped up in nothing but each other. Sirius tasted Firewhiskey on Lucius’ tongue and came to the conclusion the blond had used that to prepare his nerves for this. He was about to pull Lucius’ hair tie out so that he could hold onto the long blond hair, when his brain finally caught up with him. He pushed Lucius away with a growl, and dragged his sleeve across his mouth.

"Did you enjoy that?" he spat, while trying to quit staring at Lucius’ swollen lips.

"Yes I did."

"Good for you. Now get out!"

"I'm afraid I can't do that yet. I've come to tell you something."

"Like I said before, there is nothing you could say that I want to here."

"Not even the fact that I'm no longer married?"

It took a second for the words to sink in and when they did, Sirius looked up sharply. "What?"

"I am no longer married to Narcissa and she will never carry the Malfoy name again. I never wanted her to have my name. She was always the wrong Black."

Sirius' chest began to rise and fall at a quick pace. Whether from fury or something else, he didn't know. "And you thought I would care?"

"Look me in the eye and tell me you do not care."

Instead of doing the noble thing and telling the truth, Sirius turned tail and rushed out of the room, prepared to return home that very instant. He wished he had the power to Apparate from anywhere like Harry and Draco did, regardless of the wards around him. Unfortunately, he either had to go to the Floo Room or run out past the barriers before he could Apparate. He got halfway down the hall before Lucius petrified him.

Lucius smirked as Sirius went down without so much as a squeak. Really the Gryffindor should have known better. It's not like Lucius had never cursed him from behind before. In fact, the first time they had gotten together started out just like this. "Siri, I'm very disappointed that you would try to run instead of telling the truth," Lucius began as he lazily made his way towards the frozen body of his ex-lover. "I thought that was my job." He crouched down beside Sirius and flipped him onto his back. If looks could kill, Lucius would have been a pile of ash. "This is familiar, is it not? Remember, end of fifth year?" If possible, Sirius' look turned blacker.

"Father, what are you doing?"

Lucius looked up to find Draco striding towards them, his son's eyes bright with amusement, and had to suppress a smile. If there was one thing Lucius could thank Narcissa for, it was for the son she gave him. Draco was the only good thing that had come out of that marriage, and Lucius was thankful Harry had come into the picture to save them all, especially his son, from a doom the Dark
Lord would have certainly brought upon them.

"Sirius and I are merely working out our differences. Isn't that right, Siri?"

Draco stopped next to his father and looked down at Sirius and smirked. Sirius' eyes widened at how similar the two looked side by side with that same damn smirk. "He's going to try to kill you when you release him."

"I hope he tries."

Draco shook his head and began to walk on. "Good luck with that, Father. You're going to need it." Once he rounded the corner, Draco Apparated to his room, intent on getting Harry so they could find out what was happening with his father and Sirius.

"Now then, where were we?" Lucius tapped his pointed chin for a second. "Ah yes." He used the hover charm to lift Sirius' form into the air and personally pulled the Gryffindor's floating body down the hall. He pulled Sirius into his study and sealed the room. He then searched through Sirius' clothes for his wand before releasing the Animagus from the spell.

"You're dead, Malfoy!"

Sirius thought Lucius would move. Any sane person would if they had a rampaging Animagus charging at them. But Lucius stood his ground, which indicated how serious the Slytherin was being. Sirius stopped short of pushing Lucius through the wall.

"What?" he demanded lowly. "What do you want?"

"I would think that's fairly obvious."

"After what you did, after how you ended it, you expect me to care now that you're free? Are you insane? You dropped me so fast that I was left spinning for months, years! You never once looked back, not once. You didn't even try to fight for us..." Sirius' eyes swam with emotions he thought he'd finally beaten away. He spun away and picked up a vase that looked very expensive and hurled it at the door where it crashed ten inches away from the Slytherin's head. Lucius barely noticed. The only thing that was registering to him was Sirius' pain.

Outside the study door, two people flinched away when the vase hit it. Draco and Harry looked at each other in shock. They had never been told what exactly had happened between the two fighting inside, except that Lucius had dumped Sirius to marry Narcissa. After a moment, the two young wizards returned to their eavesdropping.

"It was an arranged marriage, I could do nothing-"

"Utter shite!" Sirius picked up a statue that he knew was priceless and threw that as well, taking great pleasure in watching it shatter into a hundred tiny pieces. "You said you loved me but you didn't fight. And I loved you, you knew that. I loved you so goddamned much, Lucius. I would have followed you anywhere; I would have done anything for you. I had to defend our relationship from day one to my friends, to everyone who said you didn't care, and then you left without so much as a goodbye, proved them all right, and I had to put up with the stares and the pity. I had to put up with watching you and that bitch everyday at school. You flaunted her in my face!" Sirius abruptly stopped and pinned Lucius was a searching glare. "You didn't love me at all, did you? You couldn't have..."

"No, you're wrong! I did. I do, Sirius-"
"Shut it! Just shut your fucking trap!"

"No!" Lucius was starting to panic, thinking that maybe it really was too late to make things right. But he knew he had to try. He had to make Sirius see the truth. "I had to do it. There was no other way. Do you think I wanted to leave you?"

"If you didn't you sure had a funny way of showing it. One day we're fine and the very next day at breakfast I pick up a copy of the *Prophet* and find an article announcing your engagement to my cousin. And you ignored me. Never looked at me, never returned my owls. Nothing. Don't know about you, but to me all that equals one thing, Lucius. You didn't care."

"It was the only way I could survive without you; by pretending what we had never happened. I couldn't talk to you about it. I'd been bred to do what was best for the family. My father threatened you, he threatened me. He threatened the non-existent children we would have had, Sirius. I couldn't let him destroy you because I was being selfish by wanting to stay with you. You are the only person in this world besides my son that I ever loved!"

"Stop," Sirius whispered harshly. "Just stop." He dragged a hand over his face, squeezing his eyes shut, trying to push back the tears. Lucius didn't deserve anymore of his tears. "It's too late, Lucius. I can't go through this again."

"I've always wanted you. That never changed. It will never change."

"Let me go," Sirius said quietly. "I can't be anywhere near you."

Lucius stood frozen, afraid to move lest he break into a million pieces, just as his heart was doing. "If you ever loved me, you'll let me out of here."

It took a moment before Lucius remembered how to move, but when he did, he immediately disabled the wards around the room. Lucius watched Sirius make his way to the door and with each step, a piece of his world crumbled and turned to dust.

"Sirius, please." He couldn't allow Sirius to leave without making a last effort. "I'm sorry for what I did to you. Every day I have regretted causing you pain. But you can't just walk away. I can't lose you again."

"Malfoy, you never had me back in the first place," Sirius said this without looking at Lucius. There was a big possibility he wouldn't have been able to leave if he saw the sincerity and heart break in those gray eyes that he could hear in his voice. Sirius left the room quietly, already doubtful about his decision to stay away from Lucius. When he had walked the corridor and disappeared around a corner, Draco and Harry came out of hiding, where they had easily dissolved into the shadows once they realized Sirius was about to leave.

"I'm sure that didn't go as well as Father predicted," Draco murmured. Harry nodded as they walked away from the study. Harry wanted to go check on Sirius and Lucius, but knew his godfather would be best left alone for the time being and Lucius wouldn't want anyone around him at the moment to witness the state he was in. It was odd, but Harry could feel the pain both Sirius and Lucius was experiencing.

"Can you feel them too?" Draco asked.

"Yes." Harry sighed and ran a hand through his hair. "I understand now why Sirius is so bitter, but I felt your father was sincere, and I truly believe he thought he had no choice but to marry Narcissa. He was trying to protect Sirius."
"Sirius may come around when he calms down and realizes that."

"For both their sakes, and ours, I hope you're right."

They entered the quiet and nearly deserted library, and headed straight for the table Voldemort and Severus were sitting at. Severus had an apprehensive look on his face as he stared at the Pensieve sitting on the table between himself and the Dark Lord.

"Are you ready?" Severus asked his nephew. Harry nodded. He stepped closer to peer into the Pensieve, only to have Severus block his path. "Take this first."

Harry stared at the vial held out to him. "What's that?"

"It's a potion, you nitwit. Drink it."

Harry gave his uncle a hard stare. "I asked you what it was, Severus."

"It's simply a calming draught, Harry. You will take it before viewing the memories."

"What for? I don't need it. I'm perfectly calm."

"Harry, I think you should take it," Draco said quietly, aware that he was inviting Harry's wrath upon himself by agreeing with Severus. But before Harry could turn dark dangerous eyes on his mate, Severus put a hand on the elf's shoulder.

"You're calm now, but it won't stay that way. I've seen what's in the memories. Will it make you feel better to know that I've taken a calming draught myself?"

Harry studied his uncle through the fringe of his black hair. "I suppose that does make me feel a little better."

He took the potion out of Severus' hand and downed it. Immediately he felt the effects working on him, washing away his anxiety and irritation of the situation. He felt a giddiness envelop him and he grinned childishly at Severus. Draco leaned over to get a better look at Harry's face and snorted.

"That's not just a simple calming draught, is it? What else did you give him?" Harry's smile grew brighter at hearing his mate's voice and he reached over the run his fingers through the blond hair.

"You're gorgeous, Draco. Why are you frowning? Let's go over there in that dark corner and I'll make all your troubles go away…" Harry began to kiss Draco and was indeed trying to draw the blond over to a darkened corner of the library.

"Wait." Draco pulled back and glared at Severus. "How is he supposed to concentrate on the memory? He needs to pay attention…what exactly was in that potion?"

Severus actually looked sheepish for a moment. "I may have gone overboard when I added some draught of peace."

"The Draught of Peace and a calming draught. Uncle Sev! He didn't need all that…"

"That's true. In fact, you probably should have given him the Wit-Sharpening potion instead," Voldemort put in.

"He'll be fine. In a few minutes, the potions strong effects should calm down a bit and he will understand what's going on."
"Hey, I understand just fine and why does everyone sound so grave? You should be happy. I don't like you to be unhappy, Draco."

"It's alright, love." Draco's hand slipped under Harry's hair to knead the back of the Gryffindor's neck. "It's time to jump in now. You ready?"

"Absolutely," Harry replied. He and Draco touched the surface of the Pensieve, along with Severus and Voldemort, and were pulled into the memory.

They landed in the Potter's yard at Godric's Hollow, where they could see Dumbledore on the porch knocking at the door. It looked to be about mid morning, and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. The house itself looked warm, whole, and alive and Harry thought the picture was almost perfect, except for the old wizard standing at the door. The four wizards approached and stood close behind the old headmaster.

"Is this the day it happened?" Harry asked.

"Yes."

"But he wasn't supposed to be here then. It was never mentioned…"

"He wouldn't have allowed anyone to know that he had visited. It would have brought too many questions to light, especially after what happened at night," Severus replied. They stayed silent, waiting for something to happen. In short time, James Potter opened the door and surprised those watching when his greeting to Dumbledore was less than kind.

"Dumbledore? What are you doing here?" James frown deepened when Dumbledore smiled benignly at him, his eyes twinkling madly.

"I've come for a visit. May I come in? There are things needed to be discussed."

James took a breath and nodded, opening the door for him. The watching wizards simply glided through the door when James closed it after Dumbledore had passed.

"Have a seat in the living room. I'll go get Lily."

"Is she with the baby?"

James looked like he wanted to say something, but instead chose to only nod before he disappeared up the stairs. Harry wanted to follow his father, but as this was Dumbledore's memory, he could only view what Dumbledore was seeing.

"Why did Harry's father look like he wanted to turn Dumbledore away?" Draco wondered. "I thought they worshipped Dumbledore."

"As much as I hate to admit this, James Potter was not stupid and neither was Lily. And they paid attention to the rumors flying around. A rumor believed to have been started by the Longbottoms before they were taken out and placed in St. Mungo's. Watch."

Dumbledore watched as James Potter disappeared up the stairs, and when he could no longer hear James' footsteps, he raised his wand to the ceiling. He must have used a non-verbal spell, for a second later, the voices of James, Lily, and the gurgles of a baby Harry softly emitted from the tip of his wand.

"What is he doing here, James?" Lily asked, sounding panicked. As if he could sense his mother's
distress, baby Harry started to cry. "Hush now love, you're safe."

"I don't know, Lils. But we have to keep Harry away from him. The Longbottoms were right. Voldemort is only after Harry because of Dumbledore. We can't let either of them have him. Seal the room and come down. Let's see what he wants and get him gone. Then we can do the Fidelius Charm over with a new Secret Keeper. Obviously Dumbledore managed to get Peter to reveal the Secret."

Dumbledore ended the spell and tucked his wand away just as James began to descend the stairs. James ran a hand through his hair, exactly as Harry was prone to do when agitated. He approached Dumbledore, and managed a weak smile. Soon he, Lily, and Dumbledore were sitting down.

"I'll get right to the point, shall I?"

"Yes please." Lily spoke quietly. She was the picture of serenity, but the steel in her voice indicated that she would not be pushed around.

"I'll be frank-"

"That's funny, you've never been up front about anything before, Dumbledore." James was barely restraining himself from snarling, Harry realized. Lily reached over to lay a hand on her husband's thigh. This seemed to relax the man slightly.

Dumbledore went on as if he hadn't been interrupted. "Your son is in danger. You must let me have him…. to keep him safe."

"Harry is safe here," Lily said. "The house is protected from Voldemort. He cannot find us here."

"Unless someone has told him exactly where we are."

"I have done no such thing," Dumbledore responded at the accusatory glare both Potters were giving him.

Everyone besides Severus was startled when James jumped to his feet to point an accusing finger at Dumbledore, who no longer wore a look of calm. There was a dangerous glint in Dumbledore's eyes now.

"I want to know what has happened to the Longbottoms?"

"I don't know. They haven't been seen in a week."

"It's a strange coincidence that they should disappear one day after they return from their mission…" Lily said. "And their son is missing as well. Can you explain?"

"No, my dear. I cannot. I was not aware you knew they had returned from their mission."

James shifted on his feet; poised and tense in full Auror mode. "You should leave, Dumbledore. Lily and I want to be left alone with Harry. You will not have him. And when we find Neville Longbottom, you won't have him either. We've heard what you're about."

"You're making a mistake, James."

"I don't think so. You've misjudged us. Thought we would follow you blindly. You're so used to manipulating people that you don't see when those people begin to open their eyes. Leave now."

"You will regret this," Dumbledore said gravely.
"Not when I'm trying to keep my family safe!"

The memory began to fade as Dumbledore left the house, but Harry remained where he was, watching his distressed parents, watching them disappear. He should be feeling more, he knew, but due to Severus' potion, the fear for his parents and their upcoming deaths wasn't so terrible, and he watched as they disappeared, almost dispassionately. He didn't like the feeling. He wanted to feel more. When he felt warm fingers entangle with his, he sighed and turned away from James and Lily Potter. There was a whirling of color and then they were back in the Malfoy library.

"I thought the Lestranges tortured Neville's parents," Harry said.

"Frank and Alice Longbottom weren't driven insane until after that night. But they had disappeared before then. Only your parents and Dumbledore knew the Longbottoms had returned from the mission and your parents became worried when they hadn't heard from them. Dumbledore kept their return quiet," Severus explained quietly. Staring at his folded hands upon the table. It was the first time he had seen the memories since finding out Lily was his sister. It was twice as painful now, even with the calming potion in his system.

"What was their mission?"

"No one knows," Severus replied. "But I believe they uncovered some of Dumbledore's wrong doings, which indicates that Dumbledore had something to do with their disappearances."

"Why did he want me so much? I don't understand that."

"Perhaps there is another prophecy. One nobody knew about. Maybe it was about you bringing Dumbledore down, and the old man might have come across it and wanted to get you out of the way," Draco put forth.

"Perhaps it's simpler than that," Voldemort said. "The Potters, as well as the Longbottoms were powerful. He must have assumed you and the Longbottom boy would also be as powerful..."

"Longbottom? No way!"

"Neville does so much better when Severus isn't around. You've never seen him perform magic without Uncle Sev breathing down his neck," Harry shot his uncle a withering glare. "I taught Neville how to fight when we formed the D.A. He's not bad at all. There are others worse than him. And for whatever Neville lacks, he makes up for it with heart."

"Yes, Longbottom certainly doesn't lack bravery, I'll give him that," Severus said.

Voldemort nodded. "At the Ministry of Magic, the Longbottom boy and Harry were the only two left standing when I arrived. He has untapped power within him."

Both Draco and Severus snorted. Harry smacked Draco upside the head.

"I'm sure Dumbledore either wanted to kill you or raise you so that he may use you," Voldemort went on. "In the end his plan worked when your parents were killed and you inadvertently defeated me by stripping me of my body and powers. After that he knew keeping you alive would be far more beneficial to him." Voldemort looked at Severus from under the heavy, black hooded cloak. "Let us see the rest of what happened. I clearly remember killing James and Lily Potter. Yet you say Dumbledore made James Potter killed his wife, and then killed him after. I want to know why I don't remember this."

Severus nodded and went about exchanging the memory in the Pensieve for the other. Harry took a
deep breath and touched the cloudy surface. Draco came with him and refused to let go of his hand, which Harry was grateful for.

They were back in Godric's Hollow, but this time it was night and Dumbledore was disillusioned. The four viewing the memory were able to see him however. Harry balled his hand into a fist when Dumbledore began moving to the back of the house, where he peered into a window. Harry saw it was the kitchen, where he and his parents were having dinner. His parents looked somber, neither speaking. They ate and watched each other, and watched baby Harry. They would smile when Harry made a mess or gurgled his juice in his mouth. And even though they were experiencing hard times, and were clearly afraid, the wizards watching could tell that this was a loving family and they would remain strong for each other.

When dinner was over, Lily took Harry upstairs to bathe him and prepare him for bed. Harry watched as Dumbledore silently entered the house through the back door, still invisible, and cast the Imperius Curse upon James Potter while he was at the sink doing dishes. Dumbledore instructed James to go on doing what he had been doing before being cursed, and sat at the table, apparently waiting. It was twenty minutes before Harry was upstairs sleeping and Lily returned.

"Why?" Harry whispered harshly. "Why do it this way? Why didn't he just kill them outright? Why make him kill her?"

"Clearly Dumbledore is more malevolent than we ever thought possible, Harry," his uncle answered.

"Your father defied him," Voldemort put in. "This is Dumbledore's way of getting back at him for it. His own way of torture."

"James, are you alright?" Lily came forward and placed a hand on his forehead. "Your face is red and you're perspiring. Do you feel sick?"

James' eyes were flickering, and Harry knew what was happening. "He's trying to fight it off."

"He was never as strong as you," Severus said, not wanting Harry to get his hopes up.

"I...I'm fine, Lily. Just tired..." Lily was looking at him oddly. "Go up to Harry's room," he bit out.

"James, what's wrong with you?" instead of backing away from him, she moved in closer. When James pulled out his wand, she only raised an eyebrow.

"Protect Harry." As he spoke, he began to raise his wand and she finally caught on that something was terribly wrong. Dumbledore walked forward and redoubled the strength of the Imperius Curse on James.

Lily turned around and ran for the stairs, ducking out of the way just in time to miss being hit by the Killing Curse thrown at her by her husband. Dumbledore dropped the disillusionment spell on himself and directed James up the stairs to Harry's room. Lily had barricaded the room with as many spells she could think of, but Dumbledore was able to disable them all while still keeping James under his power.

As the memory brought them all into the baby's room, Harry pressed himself against Draco's chest. Draco wrapped both arms around him tightly, but couldn't bring himself to say anything that might be comforting. Because he was sure nothing he said would be helpful or the least bit comforting, Harry tipped his head back and held onto the arms wrapped tightly across his chest. He wanted to turn away, but he couldn't bring himself to look away from what was happening.

Lily tried to draw her wand, but Dumbledore was too quick and disarmed her within a blink of an
"Dumbledore, you bastard! Let him go!"

"I'm afraid I can't do that, my dear."

"You will pay for this."

"You first." Dumbledore looked at James. "Kill them."

"Lils…” James' voice was a hoarse whisper, and Harry could see he was trying to keep from raising his wand. Dumbledore moved forward and pointed his wand at James.

"KILL HER NOW!"

Lily looked from James to Dumbledore. "Please, don't kill Harry. Please…”

"It's too late for that. I can't have him running around once you're dead, seeking vengeance. Nor can he be allowed to join Tom."

"He knew. Somehow he knew this was all going to happen," Harry whispered, referring to the alliance he and Draco had made with Voldemort.

It was clear James was lost to the Imperius Curse and Lily smiled sadly at him. "I love you."

"Avada Kedavra." The green light flashed brightly and Harry had to close his eyes. He opened them when he heard his mother fall to the floor, lifeless. His father raised his wand to strike down baby Harry who had been cast to sleep by Lily when the trouble had begun, but Dumbledore stopped him.

"The boy has an ancient protective spell upon him," he murmured to himself, and then looked at Lily's body and sneered at her. But then a calculating look came into his eyes and Harry knew the old fucker was planning something to do with Voldemort. Did Dumbledore know Voldemort was on his way?

Dumbledore looked to James again, and Harry knew his father was lost. Draco's arms tightened around him further and Harry watched with tears falling from his eyes as Dumbledore made his father turn his wand onto himself.

"He did it. He did it all." Harry turned to Severus who was staring at the bodies with an unreadable expression, but again, Harry was able to feel the pain coming off him in waves. He reached over and touched the man's arm. Severus jerked away from the touch before he realized it was Harry who had touched him. Then he surprised even himself when he pulled the young Gryffindor into his arms and hugged Harry tightly against him.

"We'll get him back for this, Harry. I swear he'll die for this."

"Ah, Tom. So glad you could join me." Everyone whipped around, surprised to see the Voldemort of that time standing there with a shocked look on his face.

"What have you done, old man?" he hissed, sweeping into the room and watched Dumbledore closely as the headmaster moved to stand in front of the crib.

"I do apologize. Did I just kill off two prospective followers? That is why you're here, is it not?"

"What have you done with the baby?"

"Why would you care about an infant, Tom?"
"If I can't have James and Lily Potter join my ranks, then I will take the Potter boy and have him raised to my liking."

Dumbledore frowned. "You can't be allowed to do that."

To everyone's surprise, the past Voldemort began to laugh. "It all makes sense now, seeing you here. I had my suspicions when Severus came to me about a prophecy…" Voldemort's amusement died away and his eyes blazed red with anger. "I don't like to be played with. I will not be part of your chess game! Your life ends now!" Voldemort raised his wand and spat out the killing curse.

Harry watched Dumbledore spin around with lightning speed as Voldemort prepared to cast the deadly Unforgivable Curse. Dumbledore moved much too fast for a normal man his age, and as he came back around to face Voldemort, he had baby Harry clutched in his arms, and used Harry as a shield.

The rest happened as Harry had been told. Lily Potter's sacrifice for her child saved him from the Killing Curse and backfired in Voldemort's face; all according to Dumbledore's plan since he couldn't kill either of them himself. When the curse backfired, it caused the damage to the house, and Voldemort was left weak, bodiless, and nearly powerless.

"You will not remember any of this, Tom. And neither will this child. You've just turned him into my pet, and you will be kept alive because I still need you." Dumbledore proceeded to doctor what was left of Voldemort's memories, and then he awakened baby Harry and gave him a vague false memory of what happened that night.

"That's why I dream about seeing the green light, and hearing your cold laughter. And hearing Mum screaming…but it was all Dumbledore."

The Voldemort of the present time was hissing under his breath and watched as his past self fled with no memory of what really happened. He turned to look at Harry. "I didn't come here to kill you or your parents at all."

"You wanted them as followers."

"I remember wanting them badly. And I refused to take no for an answer. I would not have wanted to kill them because of the power they could have given me. I was certain eventually they could be swayed to my side... Harry, I have to admit to being relieved I am not the cause of your parents demise."

Draco and Severus stared at the Dark Lord in surprise at such an admittance.

"Tom?"

"Yes, Harry?"

"You are forgiven. For everything. This has all been Dumbledore. We will do whatever necessary to see he pays."

"You can be sure of it, little one."
Remus let himself into Grimmauld Place and immediately knew something was wrong when he saw broken picture frames and shattered glass all over the floor.

"Sirius? Are you here?" he called out, and pulled his wand from his robes. The place looked like a disaster, like someone had gone through intent on demolishing the place. "Padfoot?"

"Library, Moony!"

Remus frowned and carefully stepped over the damage splayed across the ground. Sirius had been into the drink, it seemed. Remus recognized that by the way Sirius had slurred. And if that were true, Sirius was responsible for the damage to the house as well. Remus tucked his wand away and started to shake his head as he entered the small library.

"What happened?" he asked, and stopped when he saw Sirius on the ground, slouched against the wall at the back, his face buried in his hands. Remus sighed. He knew what this was about.

"Malfoy?"

"He's not married to Narcissa anymore. He tried to tell me he wanted me back. How could he even think I would agree?"

"Because it's obvious to anyone who really knows you that you still have feelings for him."

"Remus, I can't do that again. You know what happened to me after he dropped me. I can't do that again."

Remus sat next to Sirius and threw an arm around his friend. Dammit, he knew this was going to happen. As soon as Harry and Draco had become a couple, he knew this would eventually happen. What was he supposed to say? How was he supposed to comfort Sirius when he knew his best mate wanted Malfoy back? And apparently Lucius still wanted Sirius. But for how long? If Remus knew Malfoy better, he would have been able to determine whether the Slytherin was serious, and he might have told Sirius to give it a try, but…. Remus suddenly sat up straighter.

"Sirius, if you knew Lucius was being serious and wasn't looking for a short term thing, would you consider getting back together with him?"

"What are you saying? Do you want me back together with him?"

"I don't like him. Never trusted him. But if it means that you'll be happy, then yes, that's what I'm saying."

"How am I supposed to trust him again?"

"Make some demands, Sirius. You need to take charge now that you have the option."

"I can't believe I'm hearing this from you!"
"He made you happy once! Even I can't deny that!"

"No, it's not going to happen." Sirius grabbed the Firewhiskey bottle and prepared to ignore the world. Remus sighed and rose, he would make Sirius some coffee and maybe then the Animagus would think reasonably.

Two hours, a lot of coffee, and a shower later, Sirius was cursing himself as he brushed the ash off his robes after having just flooed back to Malfoy Manor. He'd gone and left his wand with Lucius! He was reasonably sober now and more calm, and figured he could deal with Lucius for a couple more minutes. And hopefully maybe he wouldn't have to see Luce at all while he was there. He would also try and find Harry so that he wouldn't worry when he found out Sirius was no longer living there.

He briskly walked to Lucius' study and didn't knock before walking in. He was immediately hit with the smell of alcohol, and the office was in far worse shape than it had been before he left. It looked liked Lucius had continued the destruction after Sirius had left. Sirius shut the door and leaned back against it. Lucius must have really been upset to lose so much control that he would have blasted his office apart. Even his priceless books had been thrown around and pages were ripped from them. Sirius knew how much Lucius coveted those books, which was why he kept them locked away in the study.

There was really only one thing in the study that looked to be undamaged. That being his wand. Sirius approached the desk and reached out to grasp it, and noticed the paper his wand had been sitting on. He picked that up, flipped it over, and nearly dropped it. It was a picture, an old one. Taken near the end of their sixth year. At that time, they had long since been an established couple. He and Lucius were sitting by the lake at Hogwarts, smiling at the camera, and then smiling at each other.

Lucius' hair had been up before the picture was taken, but Sirius remembered snatching the hair tie away so that Lucius' hair would fly around him in the brisk April wind. He watched as his picture self grasped Lucius' chin firmly and brought him in for a kiss, with his blond hair swirling around the both of them. Lucius pulled away moments later with the brightest smile anyone had ever seen a Malfoy wear. Sirius had to admit that he hadn't seen Lucius smile like that since the day before they broke up.

However, his attention was not caught by the images themselves, because he had memorized that picture so that it was always in his mind. What struck his heart was the fact the picture had obviously been handled many times over the years. If Lucius had forgotten him, like he naturally assumed, why did the picture look like Lucius had handled it every day since their breakup?

The memory of what happened right after that picture was taken barged to the front of his mind suddenly. He had grabbed Lucius, carried him bridal style to the lake, and then threw him in it. Sirius ran after that, dodging curses left and right, laughing all the way back to the castle. He snorted, thinking about all the death promises Lucius had yelled after him with. Sirius peered at the picture once more and came to a decision. He would take Remus' advice and everything would be determined on how Lucius reacted.

He jumped back from the desk when a groan came from beneath it. When all remained silent, Sirius moved forward and peered under the desk and found his ex lover sprawled on the floor, clutching an empty bottle to his chest. "Gods, Lucius! You git! You know you can't hold that much liquor." Sirius bent down and wrapped Lucius' arm around his neck, then hauled the unconscious Slytherin to his feet, but Lucius was in no state to stand on his own so he sagged against Sirius' side.

"Go way, whoever you are. I'm trying to die," Lucius mumbled, his head rolling to the side
unrestrained.

"By the way you look, I'd say it's working." Sirius held onto the arm around his neck and threw an arm around his waist. "Come on. Let's get you cleaned up. You would hate for anyone to see you like this."

They walked to Lucius' rooms in silence. Sirius was thinking about what he was going to say to the blond while Lucius was too drunk to realize where he was or who was carting him, so he let his mind shut down until he felt himself shoved into the shower, clothes and all, and ice cold water showered down upon him. Sirius sat down and grinned at the curses and yells coming from the shower stall.

"You good now? I don't have to worry about you drowning?" Sirius called from where he sat on the lidded toilet seat.

Lucius hurriedly turned the water to warm and started stripping off his clothes, trying his best not to stumble while doing so and verbally cursed Sirius. "My robes are ruined, you ingrate!" he shouted and threw the wet clothes out of the shower. Sirius laughed and kicked them into a pile before going over to throw open the door and wait for the blond in his bedroom.

Sirius had to wait an hour before Lucius came out again. One bloody fucking hour!

"What the hell were you doing in there for an hour? You're not even dressed yet."

Lucius, dressed in nothing but a black silk robe, ignored Sirius and went into a walk-in closet that could have doubled for another bedroom. "Why are you here?" he finally found the nerve to ask. "You've made your decision."

"I have more to say."

Lucius slowly walked out of the closet and looked at Sirius with a blank mask; his eyes had gone back to the cold gray he presented to the world. "You've made your decision," he said again. "It would be best if you left."

"No, Luce." Sirius approached the Slytherin and was happy to see Lucius twitch nervously and start to back away. "It seems our roles have finally reversed. As it should be."

Lucius stopped backing away and firmly planted himself where he was, only moving when he had to crane his neck back to look up into Sirius’ arctic blue eyes. He was surprised to see the Animagus was amused. "What do you want?"

"I want you, obviously."

"That is not what you said before."

"You want me, Luce?"

"I'm not going to say it again," Lucius sneered. "I've degraded myself more than enough for one day."

"Say it again," Sirius ordered lowly. Lucius tried to back away, but Sirius grabbed his shoulder to keep him in place.

"Yes, alright! I want you. I want you today, tomorrow, and forever! Does that satisfy you?"
"It does, yes. Lucius, the only way I'll give you another chance is if you marry me."

"I…WHAT?"

"Marry me, now. That's the only way I'll come back to you."

Lucius frowned. "We can't get married right now. What would Draco say?"

"Draco would probably say it's about time. Besides, he wouldn't have a problem with it, as he's already preparing to marry Harry."

"How do you know that?"

"He gave Harry the necklace. Harry told me about it, though he has no idea what it signifies. Draco has yet to tell him what it means. And anyway, this isn't about Draco or Harry. This is about us. You want me? Then you will marry me. And when I say now I mean now, Lucius."

"But we can't just get married without any planning!"

That wasn't a no, Sirius thought in jubilation. It was a 'Lucius is blindsided and needs time to plan out every detail' yes. "Fine, Lucius, if that's your decision." Sirius turned and began to walk towards the door. He knew if he looked back he would have seen Lucius' eyes swirling with indecision. He walked a little slower. Sometimes it took Lucius a while to figure out what would be best.

"Yes! All right, come back. I will marry you."

"Today?" Sirius asked, still facing the door.

Lucius sighed. "Tomorrow. You have to at least give me until tomorrow. I haven't anything to wear, I need to make arrangements, and."

Sirius had Lucius in his arms within seconds. "You're such a woman, Luce. Fine then. You'll have until tomorrow." Lucius allowed Sirius to kiss him, but when Sirius tried to push the robe off his pale shoulders, Lucius pulled away.

"I'm afraid you'll have to wait."

"Wait? I don't know the meaning of the word. And besides, it's been over a decade, and I want you on that bed now."

"You've demanded a wedding tomorrow. You can wait." Lucius was very firm, and moved around Sirius to go into the closet once more, leaving a grumbling, but relatively happy Sirius in his wake.

Harry and Draco were eating an early lunch in the kitchen, trying to ignore Hermione, who couldn't stop badgering them about their new powers. There was only the three of them in the kitchen as Hermione had chased away all the house-elves within five minutes of walking in.

Everyone thought Harry would have been in an awful state when he came out of the Pensieve, but in fact, he seemed to have come out of the Pensieve empowered and more resolved. He'd immediately pushed the pain away, thinking about all the things that were right in his life, so that now he could joke around and flirt with Draco and laugh at Hermione's attempts at helping the house-elves.

He witnessed what happened. He understood that Dumbledore had fucked up more than just his life, but the lives of his uncle and his new friend, Tom Riddle. Severus had told him about Dumbledore's plans for Tom long before Tom had begun to think of himself as a Dark Lord. Everything could
have been avoided; all the death and pain, if it weren't for one man's manipulations.

Harry still had no idea what it was Dumbledore was after in the long run. So Harry had gathered all his hate, anger, and pain and pushed it back, away for when he decided it would be the right time to release it. He wasn't the only one who deserved revenge and he planned to see that everyone who had been affected by Dumbledore's actions had a part to play in his ultimate downfall.

"You should have seen it, Harry! Draco walked around in a circle, his wand pointed to the ground. Wherever he pointed to, the ground started to smoke. Then when we got into the smoking circle, he clapped his hands and we were gone. It was like Apparating and using a port key at the same time, except you weren't left with any nasty side effects. It was brilliant."

"Hermione, everything I do is brilliant. You don't have to keep reminding him. He knows."

"Please stop feeding his ego," Harry returned. "And besides, I know how the circle works. I know the same way he knew." He went back to chewing his sandwich, but suddenly stopped and looked up, a grin spreading across his face. Hermione looked at Draco, and found the same look on his face as well.

"That didn't take long at all!" exclaimed Harry.

"Yeah. Not sure Father has ever been this happy."

"Ahem… mind telling me what you're talking about?"

"Sirius and Lucius have finally resolved their differences and I presume, by the happy feelings buzzing around in my head, that they've gotten together again. In one way or the other."

"Really? You can feel their emotions now?"

"Seems we can't feel each other anymore, but when other people around us have a very strong emotion, we're receptive to it."

Hermione pulled out a soft cover journal and a muggle pen from her robes, ignoring the incredulous looks coming from across the table, and began to jot down notes.

"Mione, what are you doing?"

"I'm writing down everything that I learn about you two."

"You can't show that to anyone," Harry said in a deadly calm voice that made Hermione pause and look up. "We can't allow you to show anyone what you discover."

"However, you can write what you learn about us, but you have to swear never to show it to anyone who is not a Ukatae," Draco went on.

"Really?"

Both Ukatae nodded, and Hermione recognized that they were serious. "I will abide by your wishes then. I won't show anyone." But she looked like her cat had just died. "You really are Ukatae now, aren't you? You two aren't the same."

"I'm sorry, Hermione," Harry said soothingly. "But we have to protect our kind."

"I understand." Then she perked up. "I feel honored that you two will allow me to document what I see. I swear not to let this be seen by anyone else besides you two and myself. I'll put as many"
privacy spells on this book as I can find just to be sure."

"Thanks, Hermione."

"But what about everything everyone has already seen you two do? How are you going to keep that a secret?"

"We haven't really done all that much that hasn't been recorded before. We'll just have to watch what we do from now on," Draco said, looking at Harry who nodded in agreement.

"And we can always modify a person's memory if we think they have seen too much."

Just then a house-elf popped in. "Master Draco, Master Harry?"

"What is it?"

"You don't have to call me Master," Harry began.

"Oh, yes sir! Tinky does have to call Master Harry, Master Harry. You is-"

"What is your message?" Draco asked quickly, and Hermione shot him a questioning look.

"Oh yes! Master Lucius and Master Sirius is asking for you to be ready to travel in half an hour."

"Master Sirius?"

"Yes, young Master!" Tinky clapped her hands and bounced on her toes in excitement. "They is now engaged, Master Draco!"

"WHAT?" Both Draco and Harry shot up from their seats.

"When did this happen?" Harry wondered.

"Tinky is not knowing, Master Harry."

"Must have happened just now. They don't move slowly, do they?" Draco said.

"I already told you, you don't have to call me that."

"But we do, Master Harry!"

"All right, Tinky. Thank you for the message. You may go," Draco said, quickly shooing the house elf away. Tinky bowed then popped out. Harry turned to Draco.

"What was all that about? What's up with the Master Harry stuff?"

"I'll tell you later. Let's go find out where we're going."

"Draco, I want you to tell me now. Why do your elves have to call me master now?"

Draco looked at Hermione for some help but she only shrugged, no doubt wanting it to be explained to her as well. Though she did have a slight smirk on her face, and Draco assumed she had a guess. He sighed and took Harry's hand.

"All right. You know that necklace I gave you?"

"Yes."
"Well basically, the moment it disappeared into your skin, you went up onto the Malfoy family tree as my intended spouse."

Draco looked away, afraid of the reaction he would get. He knew Harry didn't like when people took control of his life, but Draco had been desperate to label Harry as his in a more physical and permanent way.

"You could have just told me. Did you really think I wouldn't want that? Merlin, you're an idiot and a sneaky Slytherin bastard." Harry just grinned at Draco's surprised look. "It's fun not being able to feel your emotions. Seeing that look on your face is priceless."

Draco grumbled and threw an arm around Harry's shoulders. "Whatever. And you're the idiot Gryffindor here."

Harry winked at Hermione as they all walked out of the kitchen. "And anyway, if all that's true about the necklace, doesn't that mean we're engaged as well?"

"Yeah, I guess that's what it means."

Harry stopped and looked at him seriously. "Where's my ring then? I want a ring, Draco. And I want you to ask me properly as well."

Hermione tried to keep from laughing at the astonished and perhaps rather fearful expressions crossing Draco's face, but it was a losing battle and she ended up having to cover her mouth with her hands to hold in most of the laughter. Both Ukatae looked at her with raised eyebrows.

"I'm sorry. Romantic and personal moment and all that. I'll go. But I just wanted to say goodbye before I left."

"Where are you going?"

"Home to stay with my parents for a little while. Since they aren't in any danger from Voldemort anymore. I miss them, and…I can't stay here anymore."

Harry knew the real reason why she was leaving, and nodded. "But don't stay away too much."

"Harry, school will be starting soon. It's not like you won't see me. And besides, I know Draco will keep you busy and you still have Ginny here."

"She's not going to want to stay if you're gone."

"Well then. Draco will have you all to himself, won't he."

"Excellent," Draco said, and drew his mate closer for an impromptu kiss that Harry seemed to want. Hermione stood there, tapped her foot and waited for it to end. Waited. And waited… "Um, hello! I haven't gone yet."

Sirius came running up then and dragged Harry away from Draco. "Lucius wants to go to Paris for shopping. I refuse to go without you, Harry."

"No! I don't want to go! I've seen all those shops…"

"Sirius? Have something to tell us? About you and my father?"

Instead of looking embarrassed like Harry assumed he would be, Sirius nodded and grinned. "Lucius
is going to marry me. Tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" Three shrill voices echoed throughout the hallway. Sirius grinned and nodded.

"But you can't get married tomorrow! There's too much to do! What will we wear?"

"I think that's why Luce is planning on going to Paris. You don't mind, do you, Draco? I mean, about me marrying your father?"

Draco looked pleased that Sirius wanted his blessing, and he immediately held out his hand for the Animagus to take. "Of course not. Maybe you can keep my father in line."

"Oh yeah." Sirius nodded and grinned lecherously. "I know quite a few ways which includes a whip and some rope and-"

"That will be quite enough," Lucius said coldly, joining the group. His cheeks looked suspiciously pink. "Draco, we're going shopping."

"Of course."

"I'm not going," Harry stated.

"That's fine, Harry. We still have to make another trip before school starts anyway," Lucius said and smiled when both Harry and Sirius groaned.

"Well I obviously can't leave now. There is too much to do. I'll call Mrs. Weasley. She'll help me get everything ready by tomorrow."

"Excellent idea, Hermione." The witch looked surprised that Lucius had used her first name, but she smiled and nodded at him. "And you may of course throw out the Malfoy name and our Galleons to get whatever you need. Spare no expense." Lucius withdrew a pouch and handed it to the astonished witch.

"It's a Never-Ending pouch!"

"Yes. Connected straight to one of my vaults. Don't let Miss Weasley get a hold of that," he warned.

"You're going to trust me with this?" she asked incredulously.

"Of course. These three trust you, why not I?"

"Better run now, Father. Before she cries and throws herself into your arms."

Lucius only saved himself by quickly standing behind his fiancé. Sirius didn't mind and hugged the happily crying witch while grinning madly at Harry and Draco.

When Draco and his father left for Paris, Hermione immediately went in search of Ginny and then they went to the Burrow. Sirius and Harry moved on to the library where Voldemort was ensconced in his reading.

"Oi, Tom! I need Pettigrew. Sirius is getting married tomorrow and I want him married a free and clear man."

"Of course, Harry."
"Well, um…thanks then Voldemort," Sirius said grudgingly.

"You are welcome, Black. And I believe congratulations are in order." Harry grinned at Sirius' almost permanent gob smacked expression when the Dark Lord stood up and held his hand out to his godfather.

"It's rude to keep me waiting, Black. Generally one takes the hand that is held out to him."

Harry nudged Sirius. "Er…Right. Thanks." Sirius shook Voldemort's hand and refrained from commenting on how weird it was.

"Maybe now Lucius will get his head out of the clouds and will be able to focus more on his tasks."

Immediately Sirius' look darkened. "If you put so much as one blond hair from his head in danger, I will find a way to destroy you. Got that?"

Voldemort's eyes flashed a dangerous red. "And what do you plan to do then, Black?"

"I will do anything to protect what's mine. Lucius, Harry, and Draco included."

"That's right!" Harry said, beaming. "Draco's going to be your step son now." And then he peered between the two. "Both of you calm down. And Sirius, you have to remember, Lucius is still a Death Eater."

"Whatever, I meant what I said. Not one hair!" And with that, Sirius stomped out of the library. Harry sighed and turned back to the smirking Dark Lord.

"Do you enjoy getting a rise out of people, Tom?"

"Yes I do. Since you've come around, Harry, I've been having a grand time. And I suppose it helps that I discovered what spell Dumbledore used on me and was able to disable it."

"You have? That's brilliant."

"Well it was deteriorating anyway. That's probably why I've regained my senses."

"Also good news. Now, where have you been keeping my good friend Peter? I want to bring him into the Ministry myself."

"He's in the dungeon with Bella. Being together is more than enough torture. I must say I'm a bit disappointed that I have to let Bellatrix go. She's a wonderful Death Eater."

"Yes well…You'll do much better without that psychopath causing more chaos. Do you really think she's going to like that fact that you are now sane and not intent on ridding the world of Muggles?"

"No I suppose not. And a deal is a deal. By the way, I'm not sure going to the Ministry yourself is a good idea. I've heard from my sources within that Kingsley has a small warrant out for you."

"Does he?" Harry was really surprised by this. "And what about Draco?"

"No. Not yet."

"That's good. I'll still be going. I have a feeling when they get Pettigrew, I'll be able to work out some sort of deal."

"Do be careful, Harry."
"You sound as if you care about my well being, Tom. I'm touched." Harry grinned cheekily.

"Stop flashing that smile around. It really is quite blinding. It makes people forget things…"" Really? Do you find me attractive?" His smile grew brighter and he rounded the table and was amused when Voldemort backed away from him.

"You are a Ukatae now…Full of power. Of course I find you attractive. Anyone with a beating heart would."

Harry covered his mouth in mock shock. "You have a heart?"

"You will cease with this mockery. Stop flirting with me or I'll tell Draco."

"You're just no fun, Tom. Come on, I want you to go down to the dungeons with me. The look on both Peter and Bella's faces when you tell them they are mine…I'll want to remember it always."

Voldemort watched as Harry's smile turned malevolent and even he had to admit it made him quite a bit nervous.

They went down to the dungeons, and once inside, Harry had to fight the temptation to cover his nose and mouth. The place smelt like a combination of vomit, urine, and feces. "Really, Lucius should get the house-elves to clean up down here. It's disgusting!"

"It's a dungeon. It is not supposed to be clean."

"But I can smell every little thing…” Harry whined.

"Desist in your complaining," Voldemort muttered and pushed the Ukatae into the cell holding Lestrange and Pettigrew.

"Master! Oh, Master I knew you would come!" Bellatrix jumped up from her position in a corner where she was chained up and tried to run to Voldemort, but had to stop several feet away due to the chains around her wrists. "McNair and Parkinson did this!" she hissed. "You must give me permission to seek my revenge!"

"Hush now, Bella," Voldemort said, walking to stand in front of her. He ran one long pale finger down her cheek. "Were you not told why you were brought down here?"

"No, my Lord! It must be a mistake, whatever it is. I have done nothing wrong. I have fulfilled all my duties to you and more."

"I'm afraid that you no longer belong to me." Voldemort stepped away; enjoying the incredulous look the witch was giving him. "You now belong to Mr. Potter."

"WHAT?" she screeched and looked over to where Harry was standing, studying the cowering Pettigrew. "But you can't mean it! What have I done to deserve this, my Lord?"

"You've done good work for me but I need something from Harry and he asked for you and Pettigrew in return. I, of course, had no problem with giving you two up."

At this declaration, Bella started to wail and Peter shrunk more into himself where he'd curled up into a ball. "That's right, Pettigrew. You're mine now." Harry pointed his wand at Pettigrew and forced him into his Animagus form and froze him. He conjured a steel box and locked the rat inside.

"You should feel lucky, Aunt Trix." Harry grinned when Bella hissed at him. "At least I don't plan
to drop you off at the Ministry." At that Bella went silent and stared at him as he approached.

"You've changed. Again." Harry grinned and stood toe to toe with her, and didn't flinch when she leaned forward; though he did quirk an eyebrow when she began to sniff him. He was happy to note that he was now taller than her. "You smell like a Malfoy." She didn't make it sound like a compliment, but Harry grinned and took it as such.

"Well thank you."

"He will be a Malfoy soon enough," Voldemort said as way of goodbye, and exited the cell.

"But my lord…"

Harry hissed and grabbed her chin roughly, bringing her dark surprised eyes back to his. "I am your lord now, Bellatrix Lestrange. If you want to live longer, I suggest you get used to it."

Harry spun around, with the steel box securely under his arm, and strolled out of the dungeon cell, leaving a shell shocked Death Eater behind. He really wished to know how Severus was always able to get his robes to billow out around him. It had a great dramatic effect that would have been perfect at that point.

"I am your lord now?"

"What? I thought it was a nice touch. Too much?" Voldemort said nothing, and Harry understood. "Oh come on. We all know you, Tom Riddle, are Lord Voldemort. If you're worried I'm trying to take over as you, I'm not. But Draco and myself are your partners, correct? We need some standing with the Death Eaters or we will not be taken seriously."

Voldemort sighed and nodded. "You make sense. And perhaps three lords are better than one."

"See, I knew you were smart." Harry grinned and patted the Dark Lord on his skinny arm.

Harry glamoured himself so that his ears shrunk down to what they looked like before the transformation, but he kept his height and his fangs the way they were, then he and Sirius Apparated into a dark alley a block away from the Ministry and walked the rest of the way to the telephone box. Once they were both in, as well as Pettigrew in his cage, Harry shut the door and dialed the word M-A-G-I-C from the number pad.

"State your business," a disembodied voice of a female ordered.

"Two visitors to the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. We have a prisoner to drop off."

A moment went by and then two visitor badges appeared, names unknown printed on them. Harry snorted. "The security here is sadly lacking," he replied once the lift started to take them down.

"Or maybe not," Sirius muttered when the lift doors opened and dozens of wands were pointed at them.

"Harry Potter and Sirius Black, you are under arrest under the order of…"

"Blah blah blah. Just get me Shacklebolt will you," Harry said loudly. "I have someone he's been looking for. It's not Sirius Black. And we'll come peacefully. Don't even think about touching me." He stared at the Auror in front of him darkly. The wizard was smart enough to take a step back. As Harry and Sirius moved out of the lift, their wands were freely given over, and a tight nit group of
Aurors circled the two as they moved through the Atrium and to the main lift.

They were taken to the second level, and attracted quite a lot of attention. Harry smiled and waved at Arthur Weasley after the man had heard all the commotion and poked his head out of his office to see what all the noise was about.

"Harry! Sirius! What are you two doing here? Move aside!" In a surprising move of strength, Ron's father shouldered his way past the circle of Aurors to fall in step beside Sirius. "What could have brought you two here? You must have known you are both wanted. Sirius! This was very reckless! Molly will have your-"

"We've brought Pettigrew," Harry broke in. "I want Sirius free before he marries Lucius."

Arthur began to nod, and then stopped moving all together. He quickly ran to catch up again. "Marry? Lucius Malfoy? Sirius?"

"It's okay, Arthur. We'll explain everything tonight. After I'm free," Sirius said. Arthur nodded.

"This is as far as we'll allow you to go, Arthur."

"I'll be waiting right out here for you, boys. I'll have Molly notified."

"That's okay, Mr. Weasley. We'll be fine."

"And Molly is busy helping Hermione and Ginny plan the wedding." Sirius grinned and walked into Kingsley's office, with three Aurors in tow.

"B-but… it's Lucius Malfoy," Arthur stuttered, watching the two disappear into Kingsley's office.

"You have some nerve just waltzing in here like this, the both of you," Kingsley said, rising from his chair. He would have said more, but Harry dropped the steel box on his desk. "What's this?"

"It's Peter Pettigrew," Harry answered and crossed his arms over his chest.

"Harry, it has been brought to my attention that you have gone TO THE MINISTRY!"

"How in the hell did he find that out?" Harry wondered aloud.

"Pardon?"

"Oh, I just have Draco yelling at me. Excuse me while I speak to him. Sirius, you can explain." Harry moved away from the desk to stare out of the fabricated window while he conversed with his irate lover. "We've brought Pettigrew in. Sirius deserves to be free before he marries your father."

You didn't have to go yourself!

Calm down, Draco. We're fine.

And how do you expect to leave once Sirius has been cleared? You are still wanted.

Harry frowned. How was Draco discovering these things? He only found out earlier himself.

I'll be fine. I promise. My warrant is for something stupid. He can't keep me here. I don't have a Dark Mark, and I really didn't do anything illegal. Kingsley was just pissed that you got away. Draco's mental sigh made him grin. Have fun with Lucius. I'll see you later. I promise.
Fine, Harry. But be careful. Another pause. I'm not used to saying that so much. You're turning me into a Hufflepuff!

Hey Draco?

What?

I love you.

Draco didn't verbally reply, but Harry was soon wrapped up in a warm mental embrace, and then he started to blush when that embrace turned a little frisky. He was surprised they could still do things like that when their emotions were blocked from each other; but as Draco was doing a bang up job of turning him on, he wasn't going to complain or worry about that.

"Harry!" Startled, the Gryffindor turned to find all eyes on him. He masked his embarrassment and returned to stand beside Sirius. "Open the box, please."

"Gladly. Wands ready. He really is a rat." Harry waved his hand, since the Aurors still had his wand, and vanished the box. Oh yes, he could get used to feeling other people's shock. It was an addicting rush.

Immediately when the box vanished, the rat's shorts legs began moving rapidly, and scratching noises were the only thing heard in the silent room. Harry waved his hand again, and Peter Pettigrew in his wizard form scrambled right over the side of the desk and landed with a groan. He whimpered when four wands were pointed in his face.

"Get up," Kingsley ordered.

"Blimey, it really is Peter Pettigrew. How did he survive?" the first Auror said.

"He's the one who blew those people up!" Sirius shouted and stepped towards the cowering Animagus.

"I don't believe it," said the second Auror. "This is just a trick you've concocted. Everyone knows how insane Black is, and everyone has been talking about how Harry Potter has lost his mind."

"Yes, and everyone knows everything the Prophet reports is the truth," Harry spat back.

"It could be Polyjuice Potion…" the third Auror suggested, but Kingsley was shaking his head.

"Not likely, Roche. This man is missing a finger. And you know Pettigrew's finger was the only thing that remained after that explosion. If it were Polyjuice, then whatever part of Pettigrew that was used for the potion would have had to been taken before his death, before he lost his finger, and the person under the Polyjuice would not have a missing finger. You turn into the state the person looks like at the time the part of them is taken. This is Pettigrew." Kingsley studied Pettigrew for a moment, and then looked at the Aurors. "Take him to interrogation. I want Veritaserum in him immediately. And bring me the dropped charges forms."

"But sir…" the second Auror began.

"Now, Dodson! Sirius Black will be released a free man as soon as Pettigrew talks."

"Make sure you don't lose the rat on the way to interrogation, or it's your arse!" Sirius barked at the backs of the retreating Aurors. He then he sighed and sank down into a chair. "Now then, about this stupid warrant you have out for my godson, Kingsley."
Kingsley sat down as well and rubbed his temples. "You lot are giving me so much trouble."

"I don't see how. We were at that house because of my Inheritance. I didn't ask that anyone be there besides Draco. You had no right to be there and try to apprehend anyone because there was no way you could have known who was inside. On top of that, I was protecting my fiancée's property. No court in the world will say that you were in the right. But please do try. It might be amusing." Harry laughed on with an air of indifference.

Sirius leant over to whisper in his ear. "Forget Draco, clearly Lucius has been rubbing off on you."

"Harry, I can't let you out of here without asking you some questions."

"Kingsley, in case you didn't know, Sirius is getting married tomorrow. I don't have time to linger here."

"You can't go without being questioned," Kingsley said in a voice that brooked no arguments. But Harry wasn't intimidated, and he withdrew a vial and held it up for the Auror to see.

"Perhaps we can make a deal."

"What's that?"

"A Pensieve memory."

"It sure was nice of Kingsley to provide an escort for us through Diagon Alley, don't you think?" Sirius asked as they headed towards Gringotts.

He looked up at the soggy gray sky and breathed in the London air as a free and clear wizard. They had already visited the barbers, as Sirius wanted his hair to reflect his mood, so he got it cut short. If that hadn't been an indication to Harry as to how happy his godfather was, then the permanent broad grin gracing Sirius' face would have been.

"He really had no choice when you refused to wait a day before going out in public. Think of all the people who would try to capture you yourselves without these Aurors to back them off. Just more problems for Kingsley to have had to deal with." Harry looked over his shoulder at the two Aurors trailing them, and snickered. They didn't look happy at all having to basically baby-sit him and Sirius.

"Ah, cheer up, mates. It's not so bad. We'll take you to the Leaky Cauldron for a couple of pints after this," he called back to them. One Auror grinned while the other frowned.

"No thank you. We are on duty," Dodson said with a sniff.

"But we won't be in fifteen minutes. Then its overtime. And a pint sounds good right about now." This came from the other Auror, Roche.

"Come on, Dodson. I know you're upset that that turned out to really be Pettigrew, and that you didn't get a chance to interrogate me, but just think how I feel," Sirius said and dropped back so he was standing next to the morose Auror. "I was locked up in Azkaban for thirteen years, and I was innocent. You heard Pettigrew confess! And don't act like you're not interested in seeing what Harry Potter is really up to…"

Up ahead, Harry rolled his eyes and then grinned when he spied one of the Weasley twins exiting Gringotts as he, Sirius, and the Aurors began to climb the steps. "Oi, Fred!"
Fred looked over and did a double take, and then he stopped and stared, his jaw hanging wide open. "Harry!" Fred shook himself awake and rushed over to give his friend a hug. "Wow, you look great! You're almost as tall as me now! Taller than Ron for sure. You and Draco doing okay?"

"Yeah, better then okay. Sirius' name has been cleared." Harry pointed over to the man easily making friends with the Aurors. Sirius even had Dodson laughing by then.

"Is that Sirius? What happened to him? He looks handsome again. Back to looking like he used to before Azkaban. Mum had some pictures of him before that happened."

"He's happy now. He's got his man and is getting married tomorrow," Harry explained, and Fred started to nod.

"Ginny and Hermione came by earlier and told us the news. Unfortunately Ron was there so he knows too."

"Is he at your shop now?" Fred nodded. "Let's go visit then. Sirius, I'm going to the twins shop."

"'K, Harry. 'Ello Fred."

Fred whistled back at him, and then grinned when the Animagus waved him off with a grin, and then dragged Dodson into the bank, while Auror Roche went on with Harry and Fred.

"Why do you two have Aurors trailing you?" Fred asked Harry.

"Kingsley thought it would save him trouble if we had some Aurors to protect us out in public until news of Pettigrew's capture could be reported."

"Is Sirius really marrying Malfoy?"

"Yes."

He and Harry dashed into the store and away from the door. Poor Roche strolled through the door, and a moment later, was seen barging to the front of the store sporting two gray bunny ears, a fluffy white tail, and a pink tutu. And when he came up to berate the unrepentant owner of the shop, instead of his voice, they heard a very loud lion's roar.

"I guess that's three pints I owe you now," Harry said, grinning widely.

"I heard a roar! Who'd you get this time...?" The sound of Ron's voice trailed off as he came from the back and spotted Harry. A sneer immediately graced his face.

"Potter."

"Nice look. Almost beats Draco's although unlike him, it makes you ugly," Harry told him before he turned his back on Ron to ignore him, knowing that would anger the redhead.

"What the hell are you doing? You shouldn't be here!"

Harry turned around with a forced smile. It was probably a mistake coming over to face Ron. It's the first time he'd seen the red head since coming out to him. The first time since when Ron told him no one wanted him around. And that anger was starting to surface. Odd how he only felt anger and no lingering regret. Ronald Weasley had made his choice and Harry wasn't going to cry over spilled milk. He had too much to think about and frankly his life was full of people who loved and supported him. That support coming from the most unlikely people. He didn't need Ron and he'd be
damned if he would regret losing him. And on a brighter note, he was very pleased to see he was taller than the arse now.

He walked right up to Ron so that the redhead could see how tall he had become, and Harry enjoyed the fear Ron was transmitting when he caught sight of this and of Harry's fangs. "I don't recall seeing a sign forbidding dark haired wizards from entering, and as I'm a stock holder, I have every right to be here, Ron."

"You're not even a wizard anymore, are you?"

Harry smirked, surprising Ron. "No, I'm something better."

"And I bet it's true that you have joined You-Know-Who!" Ron turned to Roche, who was back to normal by that time. "Why haven't you arrested him yet? Severus Snape told Alastor Moody that Potter had joined forces with You-Know-Who. He should be locked up!" George came out from the back then and rolled his eyes behind Ron.

"Is that true?" Roche asked Harry, though he knew whatever the answer, he really couldn't do a thing about it. Harry turned and grinned, but did not directly answer the question.

"I got it, Harry. We can go now," Sirius said, running in. Pushing Dodson in front of him and away from the door.

"How come you just let me get hit by their prank?" Roche wanted to know, and glared at the twins who were snickering.

"It was funny," he replied. "And now you'll be prepared for next time."

"If there is a next time," Roche muttered.

"Oh, come on. It was all good fun," George said, and threw an arm around the annoyed Auror.

"Tell you what. Since you're protecting our Harry and Sirius from those who would try and mistreat them," here George glared at his younger brother. "You can pick any item out you want and we'll give it to you for free!"

"Really?" Roche perked up and his eyes scanned around the store. Harry found it funny that the Auror perked up like a child at a toy store. Though that was exactly what Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes was. A toy store for kids and adults.

"Yeah, no problem. Anything you want," Fred agreed.

"Not now, you won't. We're still on duty," Dodson replied and his partner gave a reluctant nod, even though there were only five minutes left until their shifts were over.

"No problem, mate. You can come back anytime," George said. Roche perked up.

"That's great. Thanks."

"See you blokes later. Ron, see you at school."

"Do you really think Dumbledore is going to let you back into Hogwarts?" Ron called out as they left.

"He may not even be there this year. And if he is, he can't keep me from completing my last year. Don't worry, you'll be seeing me."
"I'd rather not!"

"It's too bad I don't care what you want anymore, isn't it?"

"So did you get all that out of your system, pup?" Sirius asked as they made their exit from the shop.

"Fraid not. I feel…tense. Disappointed? I don't know. I wanted him to do something. It's pretty easy to ignore when he opens his mouth to spout off. I really don't know what I'm feeling."

"Hey, I understand. You want to beat the shite out of him. Suits me fine."

"Beating Ron up wouldn't solve anything, and I really don't think that would make me feel better, Padfoot."

"Trust me. It would." Sirius gave a sharp nod for emphasis, then turned back to their Aurors who were keeping back a respectable distance. "So tell me, which memory was it that you gave Kingsley?"

"The one where Dumbledore visited my parents in the morning. It will cause Dumbledore problems even if it doesn't show him doing anything illegal and Kingsley knows there is another one. He'll be asking Dumbledore a lot of questions. I didn't want Kingsley to see the other yet, because I don't want Dumbledore getting thrown into Azkaban where we can't touch him."

Sirius nodded then turned to the Aurors. "Let's go to the Leaky Cauldron. I wanna drink."

Draco and his father returned to Malfoy Manor at half past eleven, and they ran into Sirius who was only out wandering the halls sneering at the portraits. He had taken over an hour to stand in front of Lucius' father's portrait to gloat at the old man, who continued to throw threats at the Animagus even after Lucius came up and pulled Sirius away.

"You're spoiling all my fun. The least you could do is let me torture the painting since the old man went and died before I could do it in person."

"You cut your hair," Draco noticed, and then raised an eyebrow when his father smirked.

"Well yes. I felt it was time. Besides, Luce likes it when it's short. Don't you?" Lucius began to nod, but was surprised when Sirius pushed him into a shadowed corner and began to molest his lips. Sirius reached back and shoved Draco away, and took a moment to say, "Harry's in bed already. He was run down by the time we got back."

Draco nodded, took one last amused look at how his father had turned into complete putty under Sirius' skillful moves, shook his head, and moved on. If he witnessed any more he would probably be traumatized for a very long time. Besides, he had a yearning for his mate.

On his way to the large elaborate staircase, Draco passed the library and paused when he heard voices. He peeked into the brightly lit library, and held back a chuckle. Molly Weasley was inside, surrounded by the dozens of Malfoy house-elves, giving them orders regarding tomorrow night's wedding ceremony like a general to her army. Hermione and Ginny stood off to the side, with Hermione looking like she wanted to say something about the house-elves. But she stood silently, her lips pressed into a thin line, and she was giving Mrs. Weasley a small scowl now and then. Shaking his head, Draco ducked out before he could be pulled into their plans and hurried to his bedroom.

Harry had left some light on for him before going to bed, which made Draco smile. He looked over
and found his Gryffindor curled up in bed, the light reflecting off a pale arm and shoulder splayed across Draco's pillow. At first, during the Inheritance, Draco had thought Harry would remain tanned, but by the end, Harry had come out paler. Not as pale as Draco, but enough that his hair, eyes, and lips stood out in a pleasing way.

Draco doused the lights as he could see perfectly well in the dark and began to undress. He looked over when Harry began to whimper in his sleep and frowned. He stripped down to his boxers and climbed into bed, pulling Harry against him, relieved when the whimpers immediately stopped. And then he was struck dumb when he realized Harry was completely nude.

Harry's eyes opened slowly and moved a hand to brush Draco's hair away from his silver eyes, and a sleepy smile spread across his face when he caught the hot look in his lover's eyes.

"You're back."

"Obviously. Were you having a nightmare?"

"Don't know. Can't remember. Why?"

"You were whimpering in your sleep."

"Maybe I was just missing you."

Draco stared at Harry for a moment. Large green eyes were partly hidden by his hair and blinking drowsily at him and were filled with the same hot wanting Draco was feeling. Thank Merlin! Harry's full lips were red and partly open, looking very inviting. Draco bent down and softly kissed him, then pulled back and grinned when Harry hissed at him.

"What's the matter?"

"I didn't go to bed naked for no reason, Draco."

The blond rolled onto his back and pulled Harry over on top of him. Harry licked his lips before doing the same to Draco's. He wanted Draco's blood, but knew if he were to drink now then he would be up all night, and they needed some sleep before tomorrow. Mrs. Weasley had a full schedule for them starting at dawn. As if sensing his need, Draco wrapped his arms around Harry's back, pulling his mate down and nuzzling the brunet's neck.

"We'll drink tomorrow. But right now, I want you." Harry nodded and whispered some words in Parseltongue into Draco's ear, enjoying the growls that came from his lover. Draco bucked his hips, and Harry reached down to pull off Draco's boxers. Harry began to kiss his way down, starting at Draco's mouth, where he lingered there while Draco's hands gripped his arse possessively, growling while their tongues played. Draco hissed at the Gryffindor when his mouth was free, but lay back against the pillow when he felt his mate's tongue dancing over his pulse points at his neck, and then lower over his chest to tease his nipples.

Harry's hands gripped Draco's broad shoulders and moved lower, dipping his tongue into the Slytherin's naval. Draco moved his hands until they were buried in Harry's hair, and he lifted his hips again when that tongue dipped lower past his pubic hair.

Draco groaned when he felt Harry's hot breath over his cock. He wanted that mouth on him, but he would not beg. He would not! But instead of a mouth, he felt Harry grasp his cock with his hand and start to pump him in a slow torturous fashion that soon found Draco whimpering. When Harry's tongue ignored his cock and went straight for his balls, the blonde nearly fainted.
"Fuck!" he cried out, pulling at Harry's hair. Harry moved his head to the side to nip at the inside of Draco's thighs with his teeth, then soothing the action with a few licks of his tongue, sending the Slytherin into mad shudders.

"Harry…" he whined, finally unable to hold back the pleading.

"You're not the only one allowed to be a bastard in bed," Harry answered, his voice a husky purr, which did nothing to calm Draco down.

Harry was enthralled by his own actions and Draco's consequent reactions. He was the one in control, which gave him the power. And thanks to being a Ukatae now, he enjoyed feeling powerful. Not to say that he wanted to be anything but bottom, because he loved being submissive to Draco, but he could still be in control this way, on top. And since he had always been adventurous and always leaped forward, usually without looking back, he surprised his mate by sitting up and completely straddling his partner.

"Harry," panted Draco, he sounded worried, but was looking incredibly pleased with his mate. "Are you sure you want to do it this way so soon?"

Draco groaned when Harry grasped his cock and shifted over him, and then closed his eyes in bliss when Harry took the length of his cock inside him. Harry sat still, trembling as he felt Draco pulsing inside him, the pleasure shooting spasms throughout his body. "You feel so good inside me…" Harry started to move and Draco gasped and grabbed his hips to keep him still.

"Wait." Draco pushed himself up and snaked an arm around Harry's waist to keep him where he was. Draco moved until his back was against the headboard where he was half sitting and half laying. Harry leaned forward into his embrace and kissed Draco, his arms around the Slytherin's neck, fingers firmly planted in the soft blond locks.

"Move. Now," Draco hissed against his mouth. Harry pulled back and smirked. Draco grabbed Harry's hair and yanked his head back, exposing Harry's pale neck, eliciting a growling hiss from his lover.

Harry ground against Draco's pelvis and bent over so he could take Draco in and out at a slow pace, trying different angles to see which would make Draco moan more; which sort of backfired because he couldn't help but notice all the noise he himself was making, and Draco was looking smug in between each thrust of his hips. Draco yanked on his hair once more before letting go to grip Harry's hips and started to thrust up into Harry at a more rapid pace. Harry threw his head back and started to ride Draco matching his pace, thanking Merlin for their heightened senses. His blood felt like lava, and they were both shivering from the pleasure spiraling through them.

"Not going to last…" Draco groaned and started to palm Harry's cock. Harry cried out and grabbed the silver headboard, his fingers clenched so tightly his knuckles were turning white.

"Please come for me, Draco."

"Mmm…you first."

Their eyes met, and as one they grinned. As was usual for them, they turned it into a competition. One wild ride of a competition that would obviously end with both of them winning.

**Draco**, Harry leaned forward to trace the shell of Draco's ear with his tongue. **You're gorgeousss… and…Fuck!**
"Not fair!" Draco moaned, and then his eyes went wide when his orgasm hit, his entire body shuddered before every muscle tensed and it literally felt like he was being pummeled by a massive wave, leaving him gasping for air. Harry fell forward and buried his face against Draco's neck. He didn't need Draco to try and make him come, because the blond was desperately trying to move to grab Harry's cock, but Harry was already there, and cried out against Draco's neck as he exploded come all over them both.

"That was not fair…" Draco said some time later. Harry chuckled.

"You're only mad because you lost."

The next day moved ahead quickly for everyone, except of course for the two grooms. Lucius had insisted that he and Sirius wait until after they were married before consummating their relationship again, which of course pissed Sirius off, as he just knew Lucius was doing it to get back at him for demanding that they marry right away, so Sirius had gone back to Grimmauld Place for the day. And Lucius spent most of his time in his rooms alone where he could hide away and be nervous without anyone actually seeing him displaying such an undignified emotion.

The wedding was to take place at sundown and by the time the sun began to set, Harry, Draco, Hermione, and Ginny were already tired from helping set everything up. They had been in charge of making sure the wards were tripled because somehow the news of Sirius Black's innocence took second page to his upcoming marriage to a suspected Death Eater, and it was rumored by the Prophet that the wedding would take place at Malfoy Manor, which it would.

Everyone was sure Aurors would be swarming around the wards trying to find a way in, because, of course, most of Lucius' friends were Death Eaters. Lucius had escaped Azkaban, but because there were many in the Ministry who were loyal to Voldemort, he easily paid his way off the wanted list. Harry couldn't understand how Shacklebolt let that slide, but he had a feeling it had a lot to do with Fudge and that fat toad of a woman, Dolores Umbridge. Harry still had a bone to pick with her. Even if the scar on his hand had disappeared during the transformation, she was nothing but a bitch and Harry wanted nothing to do with her. And he told this to Draco, who nodded immediately. To do anything else would have been his arse, as he'd helped Umbridge quite a lot with getting Harry into trouble in their fifth year. She would not be allowed at the wedding.

Harry had quite forgotten yesterday to buy any suitable robes for a wedding, but he needn't have worried.

"I knew you would forget. Father and I did the shopping for both you and Sirius," Draco called out to him from inside their closet. When he came out he held two sets of dress robes and passed one to Harry.

"Green and silver? Really, Draco, isn't it enough that the entire Wizarding world knows we're together? No need to keep advertising it." Harry was shaking his head, but he shot a grin at Draco, who merely shrugged. Harry had to admit, his robes were exquisite. The outer robe was dark velvet green, while the inside was lined silver, which shimmered nicely as the fabric moved.

"Green is your best color. You know this."

"Let me see yours." Harry moved over and Draco held his robes out. "You could have picked a brighter color than black and silver. It's a wedding, for Merlin's sake."

"I wasn't about to parade around in purple or some such color. And since you already have green, black was the next best option."
"I don't know…I think you would look fantastic in scarlet and gold."

Draco pretended to vomit all over his nice new dress robes.

Once they were dressed the two started to make their way to the gardens where the ceremony would be held. It wasn't a fast journey as they were continuously finding dark alcoves and shadows in which to disappear into, and then when they emerged, they had to take several minutes to fix their clothing and hair.

The last time they emerged from the shadows, they bumped into Hermione as she was running about making sure everything was set up. She had a large bouquet of flowers floating behind her. "C'mon, you guys! It's very nearly time! And the guests are arriving."

"How are the guests arriving when the Aurors can't get through?" Harry asked as they sped walked the rest of the way.

"We sent special invitations to those who would have…erm, problems with the Ministry. Those who have them are the only ones allowed through the Floo. If you don't have one of those invitations, the Floo automatically spits you out at the Leaky Cauldron. Everyone else can just Apparate and walk past the wards with their invites. But if you don't have an invitation of any kind, you won't be getting past the wards. Honestly, weren't you paying attention when we helped Severus and Remus with the wards?"

"No," Draco bluntly replied, still eyeing Harry up and down, and wishing the stupid wedding was over with already. Harry tried to ignore the looks Draco was passing him; his face seemed to constantly burn when under that intense silver gaze. But once he looked back, he couldn't stop himself from giving Draco the same look, because honestly, no one should look so good in black and silver.

The few guests attending were herded to their seats and Harry took his place at the front where he would be sharing the role as best man for Sirius, who was being referred to as the groom; with Remus being the other best man, while Draco waited at the back for the bridegroom, as he was to be his father's best man. Severus was already at the front where he was to stand behind him. Voldemort was also present, but only a handful of people were aware of it. The Dark Lord had chosen to attend and he stood back against the manor, hidden in the shadows.

Sirius entered from the side and clapped both Remus and Harry on the back before taking his place. He wore midnight blue dress robes, with small bright golden suns, moons, and stars woven throughout the fabric. He flashed everyone a grin before staring at the back waiting for his wizard.

Draco grumbled to himself when the time passed for Lucius to show, because he could hear his father breathing just around the corner. Draco held up a finger to an impatient Sirius and slowly made his way around a hedge bush to where his father stood; still as a statue and staring up at the sky. Draco chuckled upon seeing the robes Lucius had selected. They were a blinding white, trimmed with golden vines and leaves. It wasn't something Draco had expected of his father, but he looked good in the robes, and knew Sirius would say Lucius looked beautiful.

"It's time, Father. Everyone is waiting."

"Let them wait," He hissed quietly.

"It's all right to be nervous."

"A Malfoy-"
"Yes we do. We're still human... or at least you are. Listen, you love Sirius, right?" Lucius nodded. "You want to be with him?" another nod. "Then don't waste anymore time. How much has been wasted already?"

"It wasn't this way with your mother."

"Don't call her that again," Draco whispered darkly, and then he forced himself to relax. "And it's because you never loved her. You didn't care. You were forced into that marriage and away from Sirius."

"What if this is a mistake, son? How can I bind Sirius to me when I'm probably not the best for him? I broke his heart once before. What's to say I won't do it again, even unintentionally? He deserves more."

"Stupid Slytherin! You are the best for me, and if I ever had any doubts, which I didn't, then what you just said would have vanished them," Sirius said. After having lost his patience and some of his nerve, he had rushed off after Draco and had come upon them just in time to hear Lucius' worries. "Now come on, Luce. Let's show everyone how beautiful you are and get this hand fasting over with cause I don't want to wait any longer to get you into bed." Sirius grabbed Lucius' hand and pulled the weakly protesting wizard down the aisle.

Lucius glared at Sirius for a moment. Being dragged down the aisle was not how he saw this starting. But then Sirius just grinned and faced the slightly flustered wizard who was to proceed over the ceremony and Lucius slowly relaxed, and as the ceremony progressed, the nerves disappeared into a calm assurance. All he wanted was Sirius, and by the end when the magical knotted rope bonded their hands together in a powerful golden glow and then released, leaving behind two identical rings, Lucius felt he had never been so alive and free, and dare he say it, completely happy.
Sirius intended to drag Lucius all the way to their room. It was not the same room Lucius had always slept in because both Lucius and Sirius did not want to start their new life in the room Lucius had had to share with Narcissa on occasion. Despite Sirius' plans for Luce and a bed, Lucius couldn't seem to keep his hands off Sirius on the way, and they never even made it up the stairs. Instead, they ended up in Lucius' study, where Sirius quickly bent Lucius over his desk, swiping everything off beforehand and vanished the robes his husband was wearing.

"Please tell me you didn't just vanish my robes. You know you can never retrieve what you vanish."

"Shut up!" Sirius pinned Lucius' arms over his head. "This is going to be short and not sweet, you got that Luce?"

Lucius craned his neck so that he could pull Sirius' bottom lip between his teeth; his answer was plain enough. Lucius wrapped his legs around Sirius' hips after the Animagus dropped his pants, and moaned when Siri pushed into him. His thrusts were vicious and a little painful due to Lucius not having been prepared before hand, but still, Lucius matched him with every thrust, loving the way his body trembled, the way Sirius' complete concentration was on him and nothing else. Lucius managed to pull his hands free and yank his husband's head down to his for a passionate kiss that left them both dizzy from lack of air and too much gasping. Lucius cried out when Sirius pulled out, but then found his knees pressed against his chest, and Sirius thrust into him again. Lucius' shout could be heard all the way down the hall. Though it didn't matter, as the manor was empty except for them and the house-elves.

"Sirius-Gods!"

"You're still so incredibly tight!" Sirius stilled and leaned over to taste Lucius' neck. "Am I hurting you?"

"No, give me more. I want it to hurt." Lucius whispered. Sirius gripped his husband's arms and pulled the blond to his feet. Before Lucius could ask what was going on, Sirius spun him around and pressed him against the desk, his hands splayed across his lover's arse, and speared into him again and again.

"You didn't forget about this, did you? You didn't forget what it felt like to have me inside you?" Sirius wrapped an arm around Lucius' chest, and ran a hand lovingly down Lucius' slick pale back.

"No! Don't stop, Siri!"

Lucius' eyes closed tightly. He never imagined he would ever feel this intense pleasure coursing through him again. He had to grip the edge of desk to keep from being pushed over the other side of the desk, and his gasps of pleasure nearly came out as sobs of delight. Sirius bit his shoulder before pulling out, and then rammed into Lucius in a nearly angry force to make sure Lucius knew what was happening was real. Lucius' yell was long and exhilarated, causing the house-elves to titter from where they were gathered in the kitchen on standby. They had very good hearing.
Lucius nearly sobbed for real when Sirius pulled out again. It was a game of tease they regularly played before breaking up. But Lucius was not in the mood to be played with. He wanted to be fucked within an inch of his life, dammit! He surprised his husband by turning around and kicking out; his feet hitting Sirius square in the chest. Sirius went down like a tree and landed on his back. The back of his head hitting a chair on the way down. Lucius stood over him, studying the dazed Animagus.

"Are you alright?"

"Hmm? Yeah...but you almost took off my head."

Lucius smirked and settled over him and in one smooth motion, grabbed Sirius' cock and guided it inside him. There was a passion in his next kiss that he'd never expressed to the fullest before to his lover, and that alone helped them both on their way to a blistering crescendo that had them both yelling out at the end.

Sirius stood in a graceful motion that amazed Lucius as they were still connected. Sirius threw his robe over Lucius' shoulders and engaged his husband in a heated kiss that lasted for minutes. When Sirius pulled away he was grinning and stared lovingly at his husband, who was staring back with a dazed and contented look on his face. "I've waited decades for this."

A sadness filled Lucius' eyes. "I know. Me too. You must believe me, Sirius. It's always been you."

"Hush," Sirius whispered, trying to kiss that sadness away. "We're going to our rooms now and we'll go slow this time." He started to kiss Luce again while turning and walking to the door, and the blond gasped when he felt Sirius already growing hard again inside him. "You better have rested last night, for you'll get no sleep this night."

While Lucius and Sirius spent the night at Malfoy Manor catching up, Harry, Draco, and Severus spent it gathering herbs and ingredients that would be needed for Voldemort's own transformation. Draco and Harry were prepared to start the spell and potion the very next night, which is why they were out in the middle of the Forbidden Forest at two in the morning. They were far beyond the boundaries of Hogwarts and were not worried that Dumbledore might be alerted to their presence.

"It's strange being out here with you two at this time. I usually gather potion ingredients alone."

"What do you do to keep the beasts away from you, Uncle Sev?"

"I'm very careful." Harry and Draco snorted, but looked away from Severus, as they knew he was glaring at them. "And I suppose I've never been this far into the forest. Why haven't we been attacked?" Severus wondered aloud, and caught the grins the Ukatae flashed one another.

"You are keeping danger away? How?"

"When we first arrived in that clearing, we were surrounded by centaurs," Draco began.

"I saw no one."

"That's because they were hidden just beyond the clearing. They trailed us for a while, but didn't attack because they recognized who, or rather, what Harry and I are. After that they mostly have left."

"It still surprises me that they just let us pass, even if you are Ukatae. Usually the centaurs don't give a damn who or what you are. They don't tolerate trespassers."
"Just a moment, I'll go ask the two standing guard." Harry stood and nodded when Severus looked up sharply.

"They would have to tolerate us," Draco said to his godfather, bending down to uncover and dig up another bogroot. "This land was ours before it was theirs."

"How do you know that?"

Draco shrugged and continued to gather the bogroot into the pouch hanging off his belt loop. Harry soon returned.

"Seems the centaurs are allies of the *Ukatae*. We are welcome here. And no, Severus, they don't know where the remaining *Ukatae* are, but they do believe there are more elsewhere. Here in this world... and in another."

Severus didn't know how to respond to this, so he settled back down to help Draco recover the roots from the ground. "What's next?" he asked once they gathered all the root they needed.

"At one point, we're going to need unicorn blood," Harry told him.

Severus shot to his feet. "No, absolutely not! Did you forget what you have to give when you kill a unicorn? I'll not let the both of you do that to yourselves."

"It's okay, Severus." His nephew soothed, placing a hand on the wizards shaking arm. "We need this blood freely given. In fact, all the parts we need from creatures have to be freely given, and the creatures must remain alive. This is a life potion. The only thing we are going to have to kill is the sacrifice."

"And what is the sacrifice?"

"A wizard who will have to pay atonement for his crimes. A man not worthy to be muggle or wizard. We've already decided who it will be. His name is Dagda Taggart," all three wizards' faces contorted into disgust at the name, "and he was scheduled for the Dementor's Kiss at dawn. He should have been taken from Azkaban tonight by Parkinson, Greyback, and McNair, and will be held in the dungeons at Malfoy Manor until we need him," Draco explained. "Voldemort will also pay for his crimes during his transformation within the cauldron. He will have to suffer for two days before he resurfaces with a new body."

"Two days and nights for a lifetime of horror? That doesn't seem like enough for the Dark Lord."

"Things Tom may not have done had it not been for fucking Dumbledore!"

"Harry, watch your language."

"It's true though," Draco began as they moved on through the forest. "Who knows what Voldemort might have become if not for Dumbledore. Tom Riddle was brilliant in his own right before he started calling himself Lord Voldemort."

"Yes, but even without Dumbledore, Tom was always selfish."

"I can relate though," Harry said. "Tom grew up in a place that really didn't want him, around people who thought he was a freak. He should have been taken away from there, allowed to grow up among people like himself...Dumbledore should have protected us!"

"You're right, Harry. You're right." Severus wrapped a comforting arm around the seething *Ukatae*. 
"Tom never had a chance. He succeeded the only way he knew how. By being mean, wielding his power over the muggles, and living off their fear of him in order to survive."

"He never had what you have," Draco pulled Harry away from Severus, and hugged the slighter boy against him. "But he will. We can support him now. Be true for him and show him the world he never knew and keep him from returning to an insane mind set."

Harry gave his lover a soft smile. Would Draco never cease to amaze him? Probably not. And he was right; Tom never had anyone to love him or support him and no one there to help control his bitterness and rage against the world. "We should be quick. We won't get home till morning as it is."

Behind them, Severus groaned. "Harry, we aren't going to the Acromantula colony, are we? I don't care what powers you have, there are simply too many of them."

"Don't worry, Uncle Sev. All we need to do is get to Aragog and then we'll be fine."

"Damn Hagrid and his infernal pets!"

The forest was darker here, the trees growing so close together that they were nearly sitting on top of each other, the canopies woven together in a tight net just as the Acromantula's webs were woven within those high tree branches, making a solid umbrella, keeping any light the moon or sun might have shown down upon the forest grounds.

Harry and Draco, with their heightened sense of sight, could already spy the large spiders scurrying around several hundred feet away within the darkness. No doubt their presence was already known to the Acromantula and as they grew closer the spiders came around to form a circle around the three, tightening the circle as the three wizards moved closer to the center of the colony.

"Stay close to us," Draco told his godfather, and then he began to weave a tight protective shield around them.

"Oh yes, because I tend to wander off alone when surrounded by hundreds of giant hungry spiders." Severus sneered and gripped his wand tighter within his white knuckled hand.

Even though Draco put up the shield, he and Severus moved closer to Harry as they stopped and the spiders swarmed around them, bouncing against the barrier, hissing and clacking their way around the shield. Harry seemed unconcerned by anything and he watched the creatures with a blank look. "I wish to speak with Aragog. I am a friend of Hagrid."

As one the spiders' pincers began to click together, the sound deafening to Harry and Draco's sensitive ears. "Aragog is dead. Aragog is dead. Aragog is dead," the spiders chanted. Harry's eyes went wide with surprise.

"Uh oh."

"What?" Draco's voice trembled just the slightest bit. "What uh oh? Harry?"

"Well, ha…um…I don't think this will work if Aragog isn't here. I mean everything depended on him, as he can control the rest of them. Not sure what to do now."

"Oh Merlin."
"Let's not lose our heads," Severus said. "We still have the barrier to protect us."

"But we can't stand here forever, and we can't leave without that venom. The venom needs to be given freely, so we can't just kill one of them and Apparate out of here with it!" Harry flicked his bangs out of his eyes and started to look around, his mind turning for some sort of solution. Draco huffed out a breath and leaned against the trunk of a tree that was within their barrier.

"How exactly were you planning on getting this Aragog to pass over some of his venom?"

"I was going to guilt him into giving me some. Claiming his hundreds of children were in danger, and explain that if he gave me venom then I could work a spell to save them…or something like that."

"You were going to lie," Severus said, shaking his head.

"Hey, in the future it may not be a lie. You never know what is going to happen."

"You didn't think this completely through, did you?" Draco was frowning at him. "You told me you had a plan."

"That was my plan. To talk to Aragog. I didn't know he was dead!"

"Aragog is dead. Aragog is dead. Aragog is dead."

"Yes, got that, thanks! You can all shut up now! You're giving me a bloody headache!" Draco yelled out to the clicking chanting spiders, and then continued to glare at his lover. "We need to work on your planning skills, Harry."

Harry ignored Draco for the moment, his brow furrowed in thought. Suddenly he brightened. "I know! I remember when the Chamber of Secrets was opened—"

"The year you Polyjuiced yourself to scope me out…I've been meaning to talk to you about that."

"Not now, Draco. Continue Harry."

"Ron and I found out that the Acromantula fear snakes above all else," Harry explained quietly. The spiders weren't that intelligent, but he didn't want to take the chance that they understood exactly what he was saying. "So we can claim there is a basilisk running around the forest…"

"Yeah, or threaten to release one if they don't give us the venom," Draco said, beaming at his mate. "See, that's a good plan. Severus?"

"It might work. Though I doubt it."

"Must you be negative all the time?" Harry asked, but then waved off his question. "It will work. We're Ukatae. We could easily have the power to release a basilisk upon them. They'll never know we would never do that."

"Since it's your plan, Harry, you can go on with it. Severus and I will stand back and watch."

Harry's eyes narrowed on his lover and he reached out to pull Draco to his side. "No. You can stand right here with me." Harry turned back to look at the nearest spider. "Where is Aragog's mate?" he called out.

"Mosag. Mosag. Mosag."
"Merlin, this is going to take forever."

"Yes, Mosag. We wish to speak with her."

"Mosag. Mosag. Mosag."

Draco slowly drew his wand. "Can't we kill them? Just one, Harry? Please?"

"Put that away, Draco."

"But I thought you said you liked my wand," Draco said, caressing the length of it. He kept a straight face, but his eyes were crinkled in amusement. Severus cuffed the back of Draco's head.

"Try and keep your mind on important matters."

"Please refrain from touching my hair. And for your information, my wand is important. Isn't that right, lover?"

Harry blushed in the dark, and gave an almost imperceptible nod. Severus shifted behind them, and soon Harry and Draco found both their necks in a severe lock within the Potion Master's hands. "I don't want to be surrounded by spiders till morning. The Dark Lord is waiting for us. Hurry up with whatever you are going to do, and do it now. No more playing." Severus curled his fingers tighter around their necks. "Is that understood?"

"Yes sir," Harry answered. Draco started to growl, but Harry elbowed him.

"Yes, Uncle Sev. We understand."

Severus released their necks with a little push, inwardly smiling. At least they still listened to him. He had been afraid the two would stop listening to him and to others since they had become so powerful, and that might have led to dire consequences.

"Mosag! We have come to speak with you!" Harry yelled, then he turned to Severus. "Come on, we'll move into the tunnel. These underlings are no good to us." There was some objections, some rather loud ones to be precise, from Draco and Severus, but Harry knew what must be done and he sighed dramatically. "All right. You two go search the forest for unicorns, and I'll take care of the venom."

"Right. Good one, Harry. As if I would leave you on your own. Who knows what kind of stupid shite you'll get in to by yourself."

"That goes for me as well," Severus replied. Harry tried to hold back a grin, but didn't resist all that much. Severus and Draco were so predictable.

The three shifted, happy to see the shield still holding up against the weight of a hundred spiders trying to get a next meal, and walked further into the colony until they appeared in a place that was very familiar to Harry.

"This is where I spoke with Aragog last time. Mosag!"

"Mosag. Mosag. Mosag." The spiders chanting became louder and Harry could see her hiding in the shadows in front of them. She didn't look like she wanted to come out at all.

"You see her, Draco?" he asked softly.

"Yes. I feel her fear also."
Harry nodded in agreement and turned back to the spider that was easily twice Aragog's size. The last time Harry had seen Aragog, he had been the size of a young elephant. Mosag was the size of two.

"Mosag, why are you afraid?"

"You are here to kill me and my children."

Draco scoffed. And yet instead of trying to protect her colony, she cowers away in the darkness. "Why would you think that?" he asked aloud.

"This is your forest. We have been warned that you would come for us. My children do not see what I see about you. Ukatae. I know I look at death when I look at you."

Harry turned away to hide his surprise. "Paranoid much."

"This is a blessing. A bloody fucking miracle. All you have to do is ask for the venom, and tell her she and her family can stay here," Severus whispered.

"May I come speak with you, Mosag? I promise I mean you no harm...at the moment." The spiders around them began to click their pincers again, in rapid abandonment, seemingly discussing amongst one another whether or not the Ukatae should be trusted.

"You may approach but your mate must remain behind."

"Like hell!"

"It's alright, Draco. She's just scared. She seems intelligent and probably realizes that if something happens to me, then she's just forfeited her life and the life of her colony," Harry reasoned.

He moved out of the protective barrier, and slowly walked towards the cowering female Acromantula. He watched the smaller spiders with sharp eyes, and was relieved when they backed off as he moved towards Mosag.

"He'll be fine," Severus told Draco, when he noticed the apprehension lining his godson's face.

Harry came to stand in front of Mosag, taking note of her pincers tucked back, nearly under her big form, and her fangs that dripped with the venom he needed. "I have come to ask you for something. If you give me what I want, you and your children can remain in the forest, undisturbed. As long as you don't start to hunt humans...unless they wander into your home, of course."

"You will let us live and remain here."

Harry nodded. "If I get what I want."

"And what is that?"

"I need Acromantula venom." There was a moment when Mosag stared at Harry, and he stared right back, his eyes unwavering. He could hear the spiders behind him speaking to each other with the clicks of their pincers. It really was an annoying sound.

"What do you need it for?"

"Not your concern. Do we have a deal?"

"And you will swear to leave us be here?"
"Yes."

"Fine, then. You shall have your venom."

Harry nodded and concealed his excitement. "Excuse me. I just need to fetch the containers." He returned to Draco and Severus. "I don't know how to do this. Severus?" his uncle nodded and pulled two large glass jars out of his robes. The top of each jar was covered in cheesecloth.

"Will she allow me to collect it from her?"

"Let's not give her a choice." Harry moved back to the Acromantula. "Mosag, my uncle will collect the venom from you." Mosag shifted and Harry supposed that was the closest thing he would get to a nod. "Your children will not hurt him either, is that understood?"

"Yes."

Harry nodded, and motioned for Severus to come over. Draco looked put out to be left alone in the protective bubble, and he conveyed his unrest to his mate. Harry grinned at him. Without speaking a word, Severus lifted the jars, one for each of Mosag's large prominent fangs, and pierced the cheesecloth with them. Immediately the venom started to pour into the jars. It took little time for the jars to fill and when he was finished, Severus nodded to Mosag and said a small thank you, which seemed to surprise the giant spider.

"Mosag, I have one question before we go."

"Speak then, Ukatae."

"Who warned you about us?"

"The half giant. He said you would kill us all, you have no conscious, and evil has taken you over."

Harry stepped back in shock. Hagrid thought that about him? Harry hadn't seen Hagrid since the end of sixth year, but he didn't think Hagrid had stopped being his friend. Harry nearly jumped when Severus spoke next to him.

"Hagrid is easily manipulated. He is very loyal to Dumbledore and would believe anything the headmaster says. Once he sees that you haven't become what Dumbledore has said, Hagrid will rethink his opinion."

"Thank you, Mosag. We will leave you in peace now." Harry bowed to her before he, Severus, and Draco quickly left. Even with their new dark natures, Harry and Draco still felt the Acromantula colony was eerie and couldn't wait to leave it behind.

"I think you should turn into your Animagus forms before you encounter the unicorns," Severus advised as they continued to travel through the forest. It was nearing four in the morning and they were all tired. "You may be trusted more that way and be able to come upon the unicorns without frightening them away."

"That all depends on what our Animagus forms are. We haven't tried to transform yet," Draco said. They stopped by a small stream and he surprised his godfather and his mate when he bent down to drink from it. "What?" he asked upon seeing their incredulous stares.

"Draco Malfoy just drank from a stream in the middle of a forest. Am I hallucinating?"

"Shut it, you. I was thirsty."
"Well go on and try to transform then. I don't think it will be difficult for the two of you."

Harry nodded and closed his eyes, his mind traveling to the core of his magic, trying to find the image of his Animagus form. When he found it, his green eyes snapped open and he grinned. His emerald eyes began to glow and he dropped down to his hands and knees. The skin on his hands and face began to ripple, and suddenly dark black fur began to appear. Severus and Draco watched, transfixed, as Harry became the largest black panther either of them had ever seen.

"Harry, you're gorgeous!" Draco stepped forward, but yelped when Harry pounced, his big paws hitting Draco's chest, knocking the blond onto his back. Harry started to purr and nuzzle Draco's face, his tongue flicking out to taste his mate's skin. Draco reached out and caressed his lover's fur.

Severus stood back and watched. That would explain all the purring and growling the two of them had been displaying. He was willing to bet Draco's Animagus form wasn't much further off. He was correct, of course. Draco turned into a massive Siberian tiger, only he was purely white with no stripes whatsoever and his eye color changed as well and was now the color of blue ice.

Severus let the two play around for a few minutes, before telling them to get a move on. Draco darted off into the forest for a minute, and Harry went over to stand next to Severus. The panther butted his head against his hand and Severus smiled and scratched Harry behind his ears, chuckling when Harry's purring grew louder.

"What is Draco doing?"

"Mrrrow!"

"Right. Like I understood that."

"He says his mate went to find you protection while they carry out their mission."

Severus spun around, surprised to see two centaurs approaching him, with Draco padding in between them. Harry made his way over to Draco, and then the two jungle cats darted off into the forest, quickly disappearing from view.

Severus studied his two guards, while they studied him. Finally, the centaurs approached the rest of the way. "Severus Snape, Potions Master of Hogwarts. You are welcome here as the guardian of the two young Ukatae."

"Thank you."

"We shall keep watch over you until they return." The centaurs did not speak after that, instead keeping their attention on the trees around them, searching out any danger that may be lurking near.

Severus felt like a youngling again. He was being babysat by two centaurs whom looked upon him as if he were a child. But he supposed he was a child compared to them. They were probably three times his age. He sat down on a boulder and prepared to wait. The Dark Mark on his arm started to tingle, which meant the Dark Lord was becoming impatient. He hoped Harry and Draco would return soon. An impatient Voldemort usually quickly turned into an angry Voldemort. He had no wish to be Crucioed when he returned home.

The Ukatae followed their noses to where a young unicorn lay sleeping under a thick fern, and they slowed as they approached.

*It's young. That's even better for what we will do with the spell.* Harry thought to Draco. The tiger
purred in agreement. The unicorn quickly woke, startled, and was preparing to run when she spotted the two large cats approaching. Harry quickly soothed her fear away and reassured the unicorn that they were not there to harm her in any way.

I'm fifty-four in human years. Not young at all by human standards. And by Ukatae standards, you two are only babies. The unicorn's thought speech was like music for their souls, and she didn't sound frightened at all. What spell do you need my blood for?

Harry and Draco shared a quick surprised glance before turning back to the unicorn. Seems she can read their minds as well as talk to them. Harry supposed since she could read their minds that it would be best to tell her the complete truth.

Yes, the truth is always the best. Please tell me everything. Leave nothing out. I like long tales.

So the two cats lay down where the unicorn was curled up under her fern and began from the very beginning. They started the story off when the soul mate bond began to manifest itself. The unicorn was an attentive listener, and they could feel her excitement and awe as the tale progressed. By the end, the unicorn seemed very happy.

I am glad you have found your family, Harry. I have heard of you.

Who hasn't? Draco muttered. Harry swiped at the tiger's ear, though his claws remained sheathed.

I have heard of you as well, Draco Malfoy. You both have come a long way to where you are now. Your love makes me happy. But I am still unsure as to whether or not I should allow you some of my blood.

What is your name? Draco asked.

Tu'ral.

Tu'ral, what are you unsure of?

The Ukatae are dark creatures by nature, and therefore their hearts are never pure. You are still young. I wonder what will become of you.

I'm going to tell you honestly that we may have done some wrong before, and probably will again. Harry didn't think there was any way to get around telling the absolute truth to this light creature. But everything we do is to protect.

This is for the future, Tu'ral. For all magical creatures and beings, Draco went on. There are many out there who would do you and us wrong without worrying about the consequences. We have a conscious and we do nothing lightly...At least I don't do anything lightly, but Harry seems to enjoy jumping into things.

Draco, seriously. I had a plan. Not my fault Aragog died!

Tu'ral's laughter echoed only in their heads, but it seemed like the entire forest could hear and was listening to her.

Let me touch you. It was more of a question than a statement. Both cats nodded immediately. Tu'ral stood over them and bent her head to touch Harry's forehead with her horn. It started to shimmer, and then glow a soft blue. Harry couldn't help the shiver that passed through him when Tu'ral's horn touched him. It felt like he had just been dipped into an ice-cold river. It was very strange having someone other than Draco looking into his soul, but he tried to relax and let the unicorn do what she
wanted. It was her blood they wanted after all. Finally Tu'ral pulled away from Harry and did the same to Draco, and Harry saw Draco shiver when the horn touched him. Tu'ral pulled back moments later and nodded.

_You shall have my blood._

Harry jumped up and in his excitement, began to run in circles, chasing his tail. Draco sat up and watched his mate in complete composer, though his ears were twitching in amusement, and his tail began to swish back and forth in a relaxed state.

_Tu'ral, what do you know of the Ukatae?_ he asked her. Tu'ral cocked her head to the side, and Draco got the impression that she was grinning.

_My knowledge of your race is limited, but I do know you are going extinct. I've heard there are only a few hundred left, but again that is speculation. I know that they will be looking for you after you complete this spell, if they aren't already. And I know that you and your mate will be very important to them and they will need you if your kind is to have any kind of future. There is a reason why you have become Ukatae, and it has nothing to do with the bond. The bond just happened to speed up the transformations._

_Wait._ Draco rose quickly, drawing Harry's attention away from his tail. _I don't understand. Are you saying we would have turned into Ukatae even without the bond?_ Tu'ral flicked her tail at him, but that was the only answer she would give for his question.

_What's going on?_ Harry asked, coming back to stand beside his mate.

_Your mate can tell you what I've said when you return home. Now change to your true forms so that I can see you, and then take the blood. It is still early morning, and you did wake me._

_Oh, yeah. Sorry._ Harry and Draco quickly transformed and watched Tu'ral circle them, inspecting the very first Ukatae she had ever seen. She seemed pleased with what she saw. Once she came around to face them, Draco withdrew his wand and a dark blue vial from his robes.

_This should not hurt._ Draco chanted the bloodletting spell and watched as the vial filled with unicorn blood. The blood seemed iridescent to the Ukatae eyes, a soft silvery-blue liquid.

_Thank you very much, Tu'ral._

_You are most welcome, Draco Malfoy. Before you leave I must tell you I sense something strange on the both of you._

_Something strange?_ Harry looked at Draco with raised eyebrows.

_Tu'ral approached and laid her horn against Harry's right arm and her horn started to glow again. Harry felt a tickling sensation and when he looked down, he was surprised to see his arm was glowing. He could see the glow even through the dark fabric of the robe. Tu'ral moved to Draco and did the same to his right arm, and it too began to glow. Both Ukatae quickly removed their robes and rolled up their sleeves._

"What the hell is this on my arm?" Draco cried aloud, looking at the strange glowing markings, appalled that something was marring his beautiful pale skin.

"It's lovely, whatever it is. And don't be so uptight. Look, it's already fading." The glow began to fade almost as soon as Tu'ral pulled her horn away, but the light was so bright that it lasted a while.
Do you know what these markings mean? Harry asked Tu'ral.

Not precisely but they are Ukatae. You did not gain these markings from any transformation. You were born with them. And they represent who you are. That is all I can say. Tu'ral nodded to them and then curled up under her fern once more. Before leaving, Harry asked the unicorn if he and Draco could come and visit her sometime once school started again.

Oh yes! I would be delighted. And perhaps you could come with more tales to tell me?

It would be our pleasure. Draco nodded to the unicorn, took Harry's hand, and they walked back to Severus in a semi peaceful bliss. It would have been completely peaceful if their minds weren't filled with Tu'ral's strange words about their existence, but at least now they could go home and get some sleep before preparing for the ritual to bring Tom's body back.
When they returned to Snape Manor, Harry and Draco immediately went to bed, too tired to do anything but sleep. Unfortunately Harry was woken twenty minutes later when his scar began to burn. "Dammit, Tom," he muttered and shifted, prepared to get out of bed, but Draco's arms tightened around him in his sleep and it was nearly impossible to move. Draco's hold on him was too strong. Harry closed his eyes against the pain roiling through his head.

"Draco, release me," he softly ordered into the sleeping Slytherin's ear. Draco's eyes flickered for a moment and Harry held his breath. He didn't want to wake his mate. No need for the both of them to lose any more sleep. But Draco's eyes remained closed and he relaxed enough that Harry was able to wiggle out of his arms and out of bed.

Tom's elation had not abated and only seemed to rise as Harry stepped out into the hallway. He paused a moment, breathing in deeply through slightly parted lips and then followed scent and senses to find the evil prat. He grumbled all the way to the lounge where he found Tom and Severus discussing something next to a softly glowing fire.

"Really hope I'm not interrupting…"

"You are," Severus said and stood when he noticed the pained expression on Harry's face. "What's the matter?"

"Tom, for the love of Merlin, stop being so bloody happy! You're breaking my head in two! I thought you had a shield up so that my scar wouldn't hurt around you?"

"I apologize, Harry." A moment later the pain ceased, and Harry sunk down into a chair next to Severus.

"Thanks. Uncle Sev, can I have some warm milk?"

Severus gave his nephew a smile and called a house-elf for some warm milk.

"Oh, and some cookies too!"

"No, Harry. No cookies. You need to go to bed." Severus waved away the house-elf.

"But I want the damn cookies!"

"Harry, don't make me treat you like a child."

Harry scrunched his nose up at the thought, but then realized he was pouting like a child. Across from them, Voldemort began to chuckle. "Severus tells me everything went well. I'm pleased."

"Yes, I could feel your pleasure," Harry said and pointed to his scar. "We made a new friend as well. A young unicorn. Her name is Tu'ral and she told us some interesting things."
Both Severus and Voldemort leaned forward, interested. "Such as?"

Harry opened his mouth to say, but the house-elf returned, popping in beside Harry's chair with his milk. "Here is your milk, sir." Then the creature bowed, crooking a small finger at Harry. Intrigued, Harry bent over the side of the chair and the house-elf slipped him a chocolate cookie. "Don't tell Master Snape," it whispered loudly. "Merry not supposed to bring cookie." Harry really couldn't tell if he was looking at a male or female house-elf, but he smiled brightly at it.

"I promise not to tell, but only if you promise not to hurt yourself for giving me the cookie, Merry."

Merry looked up with wide eyes, before they crinkled and its face broke out into a smile. "A promise, sir!" Merry bowed again, and then popped away.

"I saw and heard all of that!" Severus seemed frustrated that even his house-elves were disobeying him to please Harry.

"Was that a male or female?"

"A female."

"Don't punish her, please."

"I'm sure the house-elves are happy to have a younger person about," Voldemort said. "They probably never imagined seeing children here before. You are hardly one to ask for anything except necessities, Severus. I'm sure the house-elves get bored with only you to serve."

Severus scowled, but said nothing more, and Harry drank his milk and happily munched on his cookie. He stopped when he noticed Voldemort, who did not have his head covered, was giving him a peculiar look. "What?"

"Has your appetite changed? Increased, perhaps?"

Harry shook his head. "No, I just wanted a cookie. Why?"

Voldemort sat back. "Nothing. Tell us about the unicorn."

"Oh yeah. She was very nice. I guess she was looking into our hearts or something, and then she decided to give us her blood. She likes to be told stories as well."

"And what interesting things did she have to say?" Severus asked.

"Draco and I have Ukatae markings on our arms, and Tu'r'al said the markings have been there since our births. Which must mean that we were Ukatae then, right?" Harry went on before they could answer or question him further. "Also she told Draco that we would have become Ukatae even without the bond."

"But there is no Ukatae in your family or in Draco's. That seems impossible."

"I know. That's what I'm confused about."

"Anything else?"

"Yes, Tom, there is." Harry grinned then finished his milk, making sure to take as much time as possible. It was fun seeing the annoyed looks on both Tom and Severus' faces. "Apparently the marks are special, not ordinary for the Ukatae and we're important to the future of our kind. Again, not sure how, but I suppose we'll find out. Tu'r'al knows there are other Ukatae, and they will find us.
I find that a relief. I can't wait to meet them."

Harry's words were silently pondered. No questions could be answered, however, until the *Ukatae* decided to come visit Harry and Draco. Severus was just about to order Harry back to bed when Draco suddenly appeared, a scowl upon his tired face. He had Apparated directly to Harry after finding himself alone in bed. Draco pulled Harry into his arms and Apparated back to bed with an annoyed hiss into his grinning mate's ear.

"Draco seems very possessive of Harry," Voldemort drawled. Severus hummed an agreement, but said nothing more. He was bloody tired. "You may go now, Severus. You have done well."

"Thank you, my lord." Severus bowed and barely managed to keep from yawning in the Dark Lord's face.

"One other thing before you go," Voldemort said as Severus turned to go and smirked when he caught the Potions Master grinding his teeth in frustration. "I sense Harry and Draco do not like the way you grovel at my feet, and I'm sad to say that I am beginning to feel the same way…"

Severus stood silently, not daring to breathe. Somehow the humanity that Tom Riddle had handed over was returning to him. Severus wondered if this was a side effect of being near the powerful *Ukatae*. They had awesome healing abilities.

"This goes for Lucius too. Can't have Harry and Draco angry with me. No more bowing and I wish you and Lucius to speak your mind to me. Do not fear I will retaliate if I am not in agreement. Is this understood, Severus?"

"Yes."

"Let us not spread the word, however. I have no intention of allowing any other of my Death Eaters the same courtesy."

"Of course."

draco woke up when the sun had moved over Snape Manor and interrupted his sleep by shining through the window and over his face. He sat up and groaned; wiping at his eyes and wondering what time it was. Harry rolled over onto his stomach and buried his head under a pillow.

"I don't see how you ever got to class on time. Get up, lazy arse!" Harry mumbled something under the pillow that sounded suspiciously like, "bite me."

Draco pushed the covers off of his mate, exposing Harry to the chilly air. It was a shame Harry was wearing silk pajama bottoms. But at least his back was bare.

"That's not a bad idea. I haven't bitten you in a while." Draco began to caress Harry's back, but stopped when he felt odd bumps just under Harry's shoulder blades. "Your wings?"

Harry moved his head to the side so that his face was out from under the pillow. "Yeah."

"Does it hurt?"

"No, just kind of tingles, and on occasion it itches."

"Does it hurt when I do this?" Draco continued to caress Harry's back and pressed down when he felt the ridges under his skin. He grinned when Harry moaned.
"Feels really, really good." Harry sighed in contentment when Draco continued to run his warm hands across his back, and he closed his eyes. He moaned again when Draco straddled his back.

"I wonder what your wings will feel like. Or if you'll be able to fly with them…"

"Right now all I care about is your hands on my back. You can keep doing what you're doing," Harry murmured. Draco leaned over Harry's back, nuzzling the Gryffindor's neck. He could smell the blood pumping just under the skin and his mouth began to water.

Harry felt the blond's erection rubbing against him and had the urge to get up on his hand and knees, suddenly wanting Draco inside him. "Draco?" he shifted and Draco pulled back, his hands trailing down until his fingers were at Harry's waistband. "I don't want to beg you." Harry gasped when he felt his pants disappear, and then shuddered as Draco came into him with a slow languid movement without any further persuasion.

Merlin! It felt like a flood gate had been opened up and the bliss was swallowing him whole. Harry gripped the sheets in his hands as his mate moved within him, and cried out when Draco grasped his hair and pulled his face up, exposing his pale neck. The next thing he knew, Draco's fangs were buried into his neck, and the pleasure nearly buckled him as Draco drank and fucked him from behind.

Draco kept a strong hold on Harry's hair to keep him from moving. It was difficult drinking from the same spot when Harry kept trying to push back against his cock. Draco didn't want his fangs to cause any damage to his lover's neck.

Soon, the lethargy started to take over, and Harry felt his muscles relaxing against his will. Draco noticed and pulled his fangs out, licking the blood from his lips and fangs, before rolling Harry onto his back. Harry spread his legs and pulled Draco down to him, arching his back when he felt Draco's cock slide into him again. Draco pressed his chest against his lovers and angled his head so that Harry did not need to reach far for his neck. Draco hissed in delight when Harry bit into him, and the Gryffindor started to regain his strength as he drank.

Draco had no chance of being able to keep his control once Harry's fangs sank into him, and he gasped as he felt his balls tightening and his own muscles tensing. He wrapped his arms around Harry and thrust harder, and was surprised when he felt Harry's muscles tighten around him in an almost painful grip. Harry pulled his face back and stared at him with wide green eyes as his orgasm slammed into him. The look on his face, of complete astonishment and passion helped Draco reach his own orgasm soon after.

"If you promise I'd get rewarded like this every morning, I'll promise to always be up at the crack of dawn," Harry said once he managed to find his voice.

"Problem. I never get up at the crack of dawn." Draco licked the blood off his mate's lips. "Your blood tastes better than mine."

Harry chuckled. "Actually, I think yours is better." He gave the pouting blond a soft kiss before pulling away. "Let's go shower. We need to get ready for tonight."

When the Ukatae finally arrived downstairs to eat a late lunch in the smaller dining room, it was clear as to what they had been doing. Severus didn't even bother to say anything, as he was sure nothing he said would make much of a difference. He only hoped Harry and Draco would take it well when they found out they had to have separate dorm rooms once school started again. Because the rules stated clearly that no couple was to be able to share a room, regardless of bonds.
"I wish we had an actual physical book to read instead of just seeing how the spell is supposed to work in our minds. I would feel much more confident," Harry said over their lunch. "I don't want to mess up and end up hurting Tom."

Severus eyed his nephew incredulously. It sounded like Harry was already very attached to the Dark Lord. He couldn't even comprehend how that had happened. Did the Dark Lord realize? Did he care? Would Voldemort take advantage of Harry because of this? His obsidian eyes caught his godson's and it was clear Draco understood what he was thinking. Surprisingly Draco seemed unconcerned.

"Everything will be fine," Draco said, turning to his mate. "We know what we're doing."

"It's hard to accept that."

"Do you want to hold off on doing this until we meet other Ukatae?"

"No!" Harry shrugged when Severus and Draco looked at him oddly. "I have plans for Tom. It has to be tonight. Besides, we don't know when we'll meet others like us. Could be months."

"Then stop worrying."

Harry remained silent, though he thought it hard to stop worrying. How could Draco sound so calm about it?

"Good afternoon."

Severus scowled when he saw Hermione enter. Harry waved at her. "Mione! What are you doing here? I thought you were staying with your parents for a while?"

"I was asked to attend tonight."

"By whom?" Severus asked while trying to look as if he weren't glad to see her in his home.

"I have asked Miss Granger to be a witness," Voldemort said as he entered behind her. Everyone noticed how Severus' look turned murderous but no one commented on it.

"So…" Hermione sat beside Draco and plopped her heavily loaded bag onto the table, then pulled out a piece of parchment and a muggle pen. "Have you secured the sight yet?" her pen hovered over the paper.

"It was done last night," the Dark Lord answered, sitting on the other side of the Gryffindor witch. They all watched as Hermione scratched out a check mark next to item number one on her list.

"You've gathered all the needed ingredients?"

"Done," Harry said. Another check.

"The sacrifice?"

"Should be at Malfoy Manor by now. Hope father and Sirius scarred him for life…disgusting bastard." Draco answered this time. Another check. Then she peered at her two friends.

"You two ready? Well rested?"

"Yes, Hermione."
"They should be. Didn't get up till half past two."

"Actually, we were up at one, Uncle Sev." Harry grinned. Draco presented a smug smirk.

"Oookaaay..." Another check.

"Have you mentally prepared yourself, sir?" Hermione asked, turning to Voldemort. Draco leaned over to look at the parchment.

"You actually have that written down. You're a little scary, Hermione."

"It's an important point! He must be ready mentally for what he will have to endure for the next forty eight hours after he goes in."

"I am more than ready. I know what I must suffer." Voldemort smiled under his hood when she put another check down. She was so serious minded, so focused on everything. Voldemort happened to peer at Severus and raised a non-existent eyebrow when he caught the wizard scowling at both him and Hermione. "Severus? Do you have something to say? Perhaps an apology?"

"I have nothing to apologize for."

Hermione hissed and started to mumble obscenities under her breath as Severus stormed out of the room. When the door slammed behind him, Hermione's shoulders began to shake in frustration, but Voldemort was pleased to see she kept her chin high, and her eyes dry. Though she was hiding it very well, her emotions were screaming at Harry and Draco, and both were disturbed that she felt so much for Severus Snape.

"Very well, then. Have your bogroot mixtures been made yet?"

"Yes. But we don't want to take it until an hour before we start the process." Check.

"And your balm, sir?"

"Amortia has made it." Check.

"All right then. You are ready."

Voldemort decided he wanted to gain his new body in the same place he had done it the last time. At the cemetery in Little Hangleton. Harry tried to keep the memory of the last time he was there out of his mind; it wouldn't do to get pissed at Tom for that while he was trying to help him. He didn't know if that would affect the outcome of the spell in some way.

He, Draco, and Voldemort appeared in the graveyard first and started to set everything up, and Voldemort had brought his familiar, Nagini as well, since they would need her later on. A fire was lit underneath the large silver cauldron Voldemort had brought upon his visit the night before and Harry began to make a number of circuits around the cauldron, staring at the fire beneath it. Draco found it funny that Nagini followed Harry around like a puppy following its master. Severus and Hermione appeared soon after, along with Lucius, Parkinson, Amortia, McNair, Dolohov, Fenrir Greyback and the young wizard who was to be the sacrifice.

Draco pinned the bastard with a paralyzing stare. Dagda Taggart had been sent to Azkaban after being caught a week ago and had been scheduled to receive the Dementor's Kiss that very day. He was a sick bastard. Aurors and Hit Wizards had been after him for years. He was known for killing muggle children as well as Wizarding children regardless of blood status. Taggart took his pleasure
in raping both boys and girls, none over the age of thirteen, and then slice them up and before setting them on fire; laughing while he watched them bleed and burn to death.

Before finally being captured, he sent a few Pensieve memories to the Ministry to show off his work. Taggart had an insane mind, and he started killing when he was only fifteen. No one knew for sure what his real age was, but Taggart didn't look over the age of twenty, which was really disturbing. All of this made it impossible for Draco and Harry to feel remorse for killing him. Even amongst Voldemort and the Death Eaters, Taggart was regarded with revulsion and hatred.

"We've brought everything," Hermione quietly said to Draco, making the Slytherin break his gaze from their fearful sacrifice. Taggart may be a little insane, but he knew death when he looked it in the eye. He'd seen his death in Draco's.

"Bring him." Draco commanded. Lucius and Severus propelled Taggart towards Harry and the cauldron. Draco moved to speak with Hermione, who stood with the Dark Lord. She was making it her duty to stay by Voldemort and offer support to her tutor before he had to go into the cauldron.

"You don't have to stay," Draco told her quietly. "We would understand. It's about to get ugly."

"First; do you honestly believe I would want to miss this? You are about to invoke very powerful magic. I want to see it. And secondly, I am part of your team, am I not? What good would I be to you three if I can't get my hands dirty with all of you? Thirdly, Voldemort asked me to come. I'm staying."

Draco nodded and squeezed her shoulder before going to stand by the cauldron with Harry. Hermione turned back to Voldemort.

"Thank you for your assistance, Miss Granger."

"I am about to undress you, then see you nude. You should probably call me Hermione."

"It's not pretty," Voldemort muttered and Hermione snorted.

"I assumed as much. No need to sound bashful," she was bold enough to grin cheekily at him. "Besides if this works you'll have a nice new body that will probably make me blush when you come out of the cauldron." Then her expression turned pensive. "Sir, if this doesn't work, you will end up just as you were after that night at the Potters sixteen years ago."

Voldemort finally removed his hood and looked at the witch. "I am aware of this. But at least I would still be alive."

"That's true. And," she went on with enthusiasm, "Harry and Draco would find some way to bring you back better than ever still!"

Hermione did not look away from his disfigured face, nor did she show any sign of being disgusted by him. In fact, her eyes shown with respect for him and he was not unaffected by this.

"Miss…Hermione, I feel I must again thank you for your support and willingness to help with this. You are more than a great asset to our organization."

Hermione blushed from the praise. Then an itch at the back of her neck made her look over her shoulder. She found a pair of blazing onyx eyes staring daggers at herself and Voldemort. She smirked at Severus, and turned back to the Dark Lord. "Time to undress."

Voldemort nodded, and then chuckled when he looked over Hermione's shoulder and saw Severus.
"You're a bit evil yourself. You are going to just let him believe we are attracted to each other. Poor Severus…"

"Yeah, whatever. Poor, poor Severus…"

"We're ready," Harry called out. Hermione nodded.

"Just stay calm and remember Harry and Draco want this to work as much as you do. They will take care of you."

"Yes, ma'am."

Hermione's lips twitched. She pulled Voldemort's robes off and finally averted her gaze as she moved to his back and began to slather on the ointment Amortia made. The Healer approached and took the jar to help and began to rub the ointment on his face and along his front. Hermione was glad she was at his back so that he wouldn't see her grimace at the sight of his tall pasty gray form. She was grateful Amortia was taking the front.

By the cauldron, Harry and Draco approached Taggart. "You deserve much worse than this, however this is the way you are going to die. First, you will be drained of all your blood," Harry began and watched as Draco attacked Taggart's neck to create several fatal puncture points. They could have used daggers, but the *Ukatae* found it more fulfilling to cause damage with their fangs. And the more personal they were with the process, the stronger the spell would be.

Draco suddenly pulled back and quickly spit out the blood that had gotten into his mouth. "Ugh! Even your blood is tainted."

Hermione came over with Voldemort and handed Draco a goblet of water. He took it gratefully and swished some around in his mouth before spitting that out while Harry made puncture wounds to Taggart's wrists.

"Nasty!"

"I did say." Draco handed Harry the water. After that, Harry and Draco used their claws to create more wounds along Taggart's back, his torso, and his thighs.

"Tom, enter the cauldron. You will be resurrected in exactly forty-eight hours." Voldemort nodded and lowered himself into the silver cauldron.

"Drink." Draco raised a goblet to Taggart's lips. It was a mixture of Acromantula venom and fluxweed, which would eventually help his body reconstruct and become whatever form Voldemort wanted later on, without any lingering physical traits or soul from Taggart. "Drink it now!" Draco growled. "And maybe it's the truth when I say it may dull the pain…. You're dead anyway."

Dagda Taggart had no choice and he drank the entire content down. Draco sealed Taggart's mouth shut so the bastard couldn't vomit the potion up, and then he closed the neck wounds for a moment, so that all the liquid could pass down his throat without leaking from the wounds there.

"And now you will bleed," Draco said to Dagda. "In one hour you will go into the cauldron and everything but your bones will be boiled away. It will be a very slow process and I hope that you will still be alive at that point."

Draco left him and stood at the cauldron. He turned and took exactly ten paces away from it. He drew his wand and pointed at the ground, and began to walk counter clockwise, burning a circle into the damp earth as he did so. Harry pointed his wand at the water in the cauldron and whispered some
words no one but Draco could understand, though it was suspected to be the language of the *Ukatae*. The water started to boil, and Harry watched as Voldemort's form went still as he would be paralyzed until ready to leave the cauldron. Draco continued to watch the blood drain from a paralyzed Taggart, a sneer fixed on his perfect face. He took great pleasure in taunting Taggart as the young wizard's blood drained and was absorbed into the ground. He found he liked being a dark creature at times. The grin Harry sent his way told him his mate felt the same.

Severus could restrain himself no longer and made his way over to Hermione and grasped her elbow in a firm hold. She tried to shake him off, but he refused to let go and dragged her away from the others and around behind a large head stone.

"What do you want, Professor Snape? I don't want to miss anything."

"Afraid for the Dark Lord?" he sneered.

Hermione raised her chin. "Yes I am."

He snarled in anger and gave her arm a little shake. "What do you think you are doing with him, Hermione?"

"It's Miss Granger, Professor." She pulled her elbow from his grasp.

"Hermione, I... I'm not sure what to say to you."

"Now is not the time. Maybe never. Maybe you're too late." Hermione turned on her heel and walked away, a small smile on her face.

"What did you do to make her bitter against you and drive her to the Dark Lord?" Lucius asked when he approached after seeing Hermione leave his friend.

"I did nothing!"

"Obviously you did something. Severus, if you want the girl you should take her. She obviously wants you, and it isn't as if she's too young. Draco says she will be eighteen mid September."

"I don't want to talk about this, Lucius."

The blond sighed. "Since we've been acquainted for many years, I have no problem saying this to you. You're being an idiot. Don't waste time. She's young, powerful, and very intelligent. If you don't claim her, someone else will." This brought on the darkest look Lucius had ever seen on his friend's face. "Who knows what the Dark Lord will do when he returns with a new body. But I will say this. Our lord has taken a liking to her, Severus."

"I thought you didn't like her or her blood. Why are you pressing this?"

"She has grown on me as well. Remember, if this works, the Dark Lord will want an heir. She's a prime candidate. And Hermione seems to like him as well...I can't comprehend why, but this is what it looks like to all of us. And you know she's not going to wait for your stubborn arse forever." Lucius left Severus to think about that.

Hermione returned to where everyone stood on the outskirts of the *Ukatae* circle. Hermione made herself look at Dagda Taggart, and she couldn't feel any compassion for him. What he had done to all those children had been unpardonable and she realized with a start that she wanted to watch the man bleed to death, enjoying the way he twitched and cried under the pain. Harry and Draco hadn't completely paralyzed him, as they wanted their victim to feel everything that was happening to him,
but they had used some invisible chains to keep him where he was. Hermione didn't think she had ever felt such hatred before for another living being.

She caught sight of Parkinson and McNair giving her dirty looks, and instead of turning away as they thought she would, she smirked at them. "Is there a problem?" she asked calmly, bringing in the attention of Lucius who stood next to her, and Severus who had returned and was standing a few feet away. But upon hearing her and seeing whom she was addressing, Severus moved to stand closer to her. Lucius and Severus hovered beside her like towering bodyguards.

"You shouldn't be here, Mudblood!" McNair spat. Lucius shot McNair a sneering glare and held out an arm to block Severus from attacking the stupid Death Eater.

"I would suggest you hold your tongue. The Dark-"

"No, Mr. Malfoy. I can handle this trash," Hermione said, though she did nod at him in thanks. "Why don't you say that again, Death Eater?"

"You are a Mudblood. You don't belong-" McNair gasped and clutched at his chest, and sunk to his knees. He pulled a shaking hand away from his chest and stared at the blood smeared across it. Hermione walked over to him.

"Just one of the nonverbal spells Voldemort taught me." She looked at Parkinson. "Do you want to test me on the other spells I've learned from the Dark Lord?"

"She is scary. Didn't believe Harry and Draco when they said…” Lucius murmured to Severus. "But she really is. And she didn't even bat an eyelash."

Severus was astonished, and would have applauded her abilities if he weren't still worried about what the other Death Eaters might try to do.

Parkinson ignored Hermione. "Bluemoon! Get over here!"

Amortia moved slowly as she had seen and heard everything. As she passed the younger witch, she patted Hermione's arm. "You did well. Never show them fear. Also show off as much of your power as possible. They will get the hint."

Hermione cleared her throat and turned to look at Harry and Draco again. She was suddenly embarrassed, but was not sorry at all for cursing McNair. It had actually been a little exhilarating. She hadn't had a chance to practice that spell on anyone, and was very pleased how well she'd done it. She couldn't wait to tell Voldemort. She happened to glance at Dolohov and Greyback, both of who were laughing at McNair, and glancing at her once in a while. Dolohov looked speculative, but Greyback was giving her creepy looks, like he wanted to eat her…. which he probably did.

Hermione ignored them and went back to watching her friends. There was nothing for Harry and Draco to do until it was time to drop Taggart into the cauldron, so they stood close and spoke to each other quietly, probably about how the next part of the spell would work. Hermione was very curious as to what would happen. She knew they had to remain at the cauldron for the full two days in order to keep up the spell for that amount of time. This worried her. It was to be very powerful magic, and they had to sustain it for a great amount of time. How would their bodies react to that, without sustenance or sleep? But then she remembered that was why they had taken the bogroot potion, which would help with the lack of food or sleep.

Before coming, Hermione told Harry and Draco she would stay with them the entire time, but Amortia said no. The Healer threatened to drag Hermione away herself if she didn't leave for some
time to eat and rest. Hermione didn't think it was fair that Severus, Amortia, and Lucius were able to stay the entire time, but she couldn't. And the other Death Eaters were going to leave after the spell started, but would be summoned back just before Voldemort came back with a new body. Hermione found herself becoming agitated and frustrated. She wanted something to happen soon. She could feel Harry and Draco's power building up, preparing to be released, and that was stimulating her own magical core. She decided to sit and think of something else to calm herself. Too bad her mind turned to something that wasn't calming at all.

Severus Snape. She knew, was absolutely certain, he had feelings for her. Otherwise he wouldn't seem so jealous that she was spending so much time with Voldemort. But he was a stubborn git, and seemed to think pushing her away was the best thing to do. Why? Why couldn't he just let things happen? Or, more importantly, if he didn't want anything to happen, why the hell had he kissed her at Harry's party? That seemed completely unfair! Hermione didn't realize she'd been lowly growling until Lucius came to stand beside her and brought it to her attention.

"You aren't turning into a Ukatae now, are you? I don't think we need three around."

"Pardon?" she looked up at him and he smirked.

"You were growling."

"Oh…Er…"

"What were you thinking about?" Lucius waved her over so he could sit where she was, on the patch of ground that seemed less dirty. Hermione had to smile at this. But then she realized what he asked and started to blush.

"Not to be rude, but why are you over here talking to me?"

"All my reservations about you were blown away when you cursed McNair. That was rather brilliant, by the way. Can't wait to tell Siri." Then he raised a perfectly sculpted eyebrow. It was hard not to feel a little jealously over that. The Malfoy men always looked perfect. "Nice try of changing the subject. Care to answer my question?"

Hermione stared at the ground for a moment, deciding what she wanted to say. She looked up and noticed black eyes once again on her and smirked inwardly. She was a grown woman. She was intelligent, and driven. And Hermione Granger knew what she wanted. If Severus wanted to play hard to get, then so be it. She would have her fun with him.

"I just realized…Severus is gay." She held back her laughter when Lucius' eyes went wide. "That's it, right? He doesn't want me because he's gay. That would explain a lot. He could have explained it to me though." She let out a lusty sigh. "Oh well. There are other fish in the sea, as they say. Excuse me, Mr. Malfoy." Hermione hurried over to Amortia, who by now had patched McNair up, and sent him away, leaving Lucius staring at her back in shock.

"What's wrong with you?" Severus asked, coming up to him. Lucius held back his laughter. "Well?"

"Hermione swears your gay, Severus. She thinks that's why you're being an idiot."

"She said what?" Severus' silky voice had lowered dangerously, but Lucius ignored it.

"She thinks you're gay," he replied calmly.

"And you didn't correct her?"
"Why would I do that? It's not my business. And I thought you didn't want her. Hermione thinking this will keep her away. Isn't that what you wanted?"

"I never said that," Severus replied through clenched teeth.

"I think you should let her know then. She said there are more fish in the sea, whatever that means."

"It's a muggle term." And Severus knew exactly what it meant.

Lucius had no reply and left Severus to stew in his anger. He doubted Severus would stand to allow Hermione to think such things, and since Lucius wasn't stupid, he knew the young witch had said it on purpose and knew full well Severus wasn't really gay. Lucius moved to stand at the very edge of the circle around the cauldron. He spared a small glance at Taggart, who had by now dropped to the ground and was lying on his back staring at the darkened sky. Draco, having spotted his father, began to move forward, but stopped next to the still body and kicked it.

"Wake up! You aren't allowed to die yet."

"I've got him, love. Go speak with your father." Harry came over, flicked his wand, and Taggart was pulled up to his feet like a puppet on strings. Taggart started crying and begging for his life. Harry silenced him with a hiss, baring his fangs. Draco turned away and continued on to his father.

"How long before he goes in?" Lucius asked, flicking his gray eyes to Taggart.

"Thirteen minutes, fifty seconds," Draco replied automatically without having to physically check the time.

"Did you see what Hermione did to McNair after he called her a mudblood?" Draco's eyes narrowed and began to search McNair out. "No, don't worry. He's not here anymore. Hermione took care of that."

"How?"

"She threw a nonverbal cutting hex at him. Perfectly and without any indication at all."

"Really?" Draco grinned and looked around for the aforementioned witch. "Where is she? Has she left as well?"

"No, no. She's just playing a game with Severus. It is rather amusing. Seems she thinks Severus is gay."

"She knows damn well Severus is straight!"

"I know that, she knows that, and I daresay Severus knows she was lying…"

"Then why would she say that?"

Lucius turned and pointed to Severus, who by that time had worked himself into a reckless state, and was now storming after Hermione who had gone to patrol the barrier that kept anyone not in their party from seeing what they were doing, or entering the area.

"Uncle Sev looks very angry. Are we sure we should let him go after Hermione in that state?"

"Oh yes." Lucius grinned sadistically. "Yes, indeed. We may even see the blasts from here."

"Told you she was a force to be reckoned with." Draco looked back when Harry called to him, then
he nodded. "Look, it's about to start. Harry and I will be unresponsive for most of it after we've added everything to the cauldron…"

"Do not worry, son. Severus and I will be on guard."

"Whatever happens, do not step over this line."

Lucius didn't like that order, but he knew he had no choice. "Good luck, then."

Lucius backed away from the circle and watched. He saw Hermione return from the corner of his eye. When he turned fully, he noticed she wore a big grin on her face, and Severus followed almost dazedly behind. Lucius knew nothing good had happened, as Severus' scowl could have wilted a flower garden. He wondered what had happened in that short amount of time. He would be sure to find out later, but now he wanted to watch his son and Harry start.

Harry vanished Taggart's clothes and Draco said a spell the would quicken the blood draining process, making sure that every last drop left his body. It would not be good if even one drop ended up in the cauldron. Taggart's body began to convulse, and his eyes rolled to the back of his head, leaving only the whites visible.

_Nagini, I need you_, Harry hissed to the snake lying as close to the fire as she could get. The snake immediately slithered over to him. Harry was just about to lower his arm to the snake when Draco stopped him.

"I'm not sure you should do this."

"Oh, now you're not sure. What happened to stop worrying?"

"You're about to let this snake inject you with her venom! I still don't understand why we can't just get some of your blood, put it into a vial, and then mix the venom in that way."

"We need it to be mixed with either your blood or mine and it needs to be done within a body. And it's going to be me since Tom already has my blood in his body. The mixture is more compatible this way. There won't be a chance that his new body will reject it."

"You might die if we don't get all the venom out."

"Relax, would you. You have the spell to stop it from passing from my arm to the rest of my body. We'll get all the venom out. Besides, Nagini likes me now._ Don't you, sweetheart?_ Harry caressed the large snake over her head. "She's not going to allow too much venom into my blood."

_I will be sure not to push the venom into your bloodstream too quickly. Do not worry. My master would be displeased should you perish_, Nagini replied, not understanding the human words, but understanding the anxiety on the light haired elf's face and figuring out herself what they were talking about.

Harry beamed at her. _Glad we're on the same side now, Nagini_. He turned back to Draco to find his lover slightly flushed and panting. While Draco was busy trying to control his sexual urges, Harry instructed Nagini to strike, and she did with quick efficiency.

Harry couldn't help crying out at the pain as the venom flowed into his arm. Draco pointed his wand at Harry's elbow and muttered the spell, stopping the venom from being able to pass that spot. The spell wouldn't hold for very long, so they had to be quick about drawing out the blood and venom once it was mixed and getting it into the cauldron. But a minute had to pass before they could do
anything, and Draco had to stand by and watch as Harry clenched his jaw tightly shut against the stinging pain. As soon as the sixty seconds were up, Draco pulled out an athame and made a vertical cut in between Nagini's fang marks, and drew the blood and poison out with his wand, then deposited it into a vial.

"Is that it? Did I get it all?" Draco asked frantically. Harry dropped to his knees, clutching at his arm, which had begun to shake beyond the brunet's control.

"Don't know but you need to get it into the cauldron now. That piece of shite needs to go in as well. We can't be off by even half a minute."

"Harry-"

"Do it, Draco! I'll get the rest out."

Draco spun away from Harry and dropped the blood and venom into the water over Voldemort's still and deathly white form. The water changed color and consistency immediately, and began to smell as it looked; like black tar. It bubbled and hissed, just as it was supposed to. Draco grabbed the sacrifice and dragged Taggart's body over to the cauldron. "Good, you're alive... just barely though. For the crimes you've committed, you don't even deserve to be called human, let alone a muggle or wizard. I hope this is a hundred times more painful than anything you put those children through."

He levitated Taggart's limp body and slowly lowered him into the cauldron, and watched with sadistic glee as Taggart opened his mouth in a silent scream as he sunk under the black potion. "Good riddance!"

Draco turned back to Harry, who had gotten to his feet and was using his wand to try and get rid of any lingering poison. Draco grabbed his arm and began to suck at the wound, drawing the blood into his mouth, tasting for any of the venom. When he tasted poison, he sucked without swallowing, then pulled back to spit it out, and continued the process, until all he tasted was Harry's delicious blood.

"There, you're good."

Draco rinsed his mouth out, but the poison's taste lingered in his mouth. His stomach began to roil and he had to move away from Harry as his body was rejecting the poison he'd failed to spit out.

"Hey! Draco? Are you all right?" Harry came behind him and pulled blond hair away from his face. "You didn't have to suck it out yourself. Idiot."

"Yes I did. I had to be sure." His voice came out in a hoarse whisper. "Give me some water." Harry hastily complied, and watched, worried, as his mate drank the water, and then made himself throw up again. By this time everyone who had come with them was standing around the circle.

"You all right?" Draco asked when he'd finished his puke fest. Harry chuckled dryly.

"It's me who should be asking that."

"I'm fine. It's gone. Are you all right?" he demanded.

"Yes love, I'm fine. You got it all." Harry smiled softly at him and used the sleeve of his robe to wipe Draco's fine mouth, and then pushed his hair away from his silver eyes. Draco gripped Harry's arm and covered the wound with his hand. It only took a couple of seconds for the wound to heal.

"Let's get ready for the hard part."
Draco and Harry moved to stand at opposite sides of the cauldron, both tucking their wands into their robes and raising their hands to the sky. They began to chant *Ukatae* words, just four words, over and over again. *Eirhnai. Wyn. Fyndali. Wuodnli…*

"Here it goes," Severus said softly, looking up as lightning and thunder rolled through the sky at some distance away and dark black clouds began to gather overhead. Many around the circle shifted nervously from such show of elemental power.

"Merlin, the air seems to be thickening. Do you know what's happening? Have they explained it to any of you?" Amortia asked.

Severus nodded and launched into an explanation. "The words they are chanting, we assume, are earth, air, fire, and water."

"You don't know for certain?"

"Harry and Draco assume that is what it is because they are summoning the elemental powers together to bond with their magic."

"Which is why this spell is so powerful," Lucius added. "Wizards and witches don't usually invoke the elementals, at least… not all at once and for such a long period of time. The power that would come from that would overwhelm us. We are not meant to yield such power. As a species, humans are not old enough; we have not developed enough for such magic as that."

Severus nodded and went on. "They will chant this for the next thirty minutes, until the magic has risen and completely fuses itself with the potion and the *Ukatae*. By that time, Harry and Draco will be entranced by their magic; they will not move or speak, but will be a sort of conduit to keep the magic flowing and the spell working for the time it takes for the Dark Lord's new body to be formed. We may even feel the backlash of the magic, and I'm not sure, but we could lose consciousness. Depends on how far out their power spreads. Let's hope it doesn't go beyond the protective barrier we've set up to keep others away. Otherwise, Dumbledore may have alarms of some sort letting him know when magic goes on here as it did before after the Triwizard Tournament."

"Didn't like not knowing what was happening, did he?" Lucius sneered into the sky; picturing the old wizard getting struck by one of the bolts he saw shooting through it.

"No. He was very displeased."

"Even if Dumbledore did know what was going to happen, do you think he would have stopped it? I mean stopped Voldemort from getting his body back? Stopped Harry and Cedric from being Portkeyed?" Hermione asked, feeling a pang of sadness for the death of her fellow student.

"Who knows what goes on in his head? Before I discovered what he was really up to in regards to the Dark Lord, and those Pensieve memories, I had no idea all he wanted was control over everyone in his own bizarre way."

"That reminds me, Severus…how did you come by that information?" Lucius asked while keeping his eyes on the *Ukatae*. Harry and Draco's voices were increasing in volume and so was the pressure surrounding them.

"Believe it or not, he told me."

"I don't believe it."

"It's true. We were drinking…did you know he talks in his sleep when he's drunk?"
"It can’t have been that simple."

"I assure you it was, Hermione. Dumbledore started mumbling, and when I was about to leave him, his mumbles turned into solid words. You can’t imagine what I felt when he began to babble on about young Tom Riddle and a fake prophecy."

"I think I can understand…” she murmured, remembering what she felt when she read Severus’ mother’s journal, and then learning what Dumbledore had done to Harry’s parents. She understood all too well.

Suddenly, the ground began to shake under their feet and the lighting began to strike the ground very near them. Amortia cried out in pain as a bolt hit the ground directly in front of her. She’d been looking directly at it and the light seared her eyes. Lucius caught her just before she hit the ground. Hermione unconsciously grabbed onto Severus’ arm and buried her face against his robes and he pulled her back as well and they all took cover behind some gravestones several yards away. Most of the other Death Eaters Apparated away in fear.

The fire under the cauldron leapt up around it, rising high into the sky and turning a bright blue color, and then the sky opened up to blanket them all in a torrent of rain. The potion inside the cauldron seemed safe from the rain. Severus could see the water was bouncing off an invisible shield.

Harry and Draco's eyes began to glow and so did the circle Draco had drawn around the cauldron. It was a white-hot glow, and the drawn circle rose up to create a semi solid white wall, blocking the Ukatae and the silver cauldron from view.

"What’s happening?" Hermione yelled over the noise.

"Nature is reacting to the summons. The earth has answered the Ukatae call by creating a slight earthquake, the lightning which is the fire, has answered…."

"The rain is the water." Hermione said, nodding. "And the wind certainly is blowing harder than normal."

"Amortia needs to go to St. Mungo's," Lucius interrupted, holding the Healer up. "Her eyes need to be seen to."

"Fine Healer I am. Can't even fix my own eyes…” she sniffed, wiping her nose on Lucius' sleeve, who cringed but kept rubbing Amortia’s back to calm her. That lightning had scared the devil out of her. "Hermione, you go with her."

Hermione nodded, and took Amortia's hand and then let Amortia Apparate them to St. Mungo's.

"How is it that Hermione doesn't Apparate? She’s old enough."

"She wanted to wait for Harry and Weasley to come of age so they could all take the test together. I suppose she still hasn't done it because so much has happened this summer," Severus answered absently.

They turned back to the circle just in time to see the white glowing wall drop down and hit the ground with a great force. Severus pulled Lucius away from behind the gravestone just as the wind burst forth from the circle in a rippling effect, toppling trees and gravestones as it sped out and beyond the barrier.

"Merlin, that was stronger than anything I could have imagined… Dumbledore will have felt that," Severus said. Lucius stared at the large gravestone they had been taking cover behind. It lay on the
ground, broken in three pieces.

"Thank you, Severus. I believe you've just saved my life."

"Don't get all simpering on me, Lucius. I just didn't want depressed dogs and *Ukatae* about, that's all."

Lucius snorted and took that as an acceptance of his thanks.
Hermione returned to Grimmauld Place to rest instead of at her parent's home. But only after she had seen that Amortia's eyes had been healed. Amortia told Hermione to go home, get some food and rest, and promised to owl her when Harry and Draco were moving again. Hermione had agreed, but said that she would be visiting with Sirius and Remus at the Black residence. When she arrived, she was surprised to come upon Remus in a close position with Nymphadora Tonks. They weren't in that bad of a position, just snogging at the counter in the kitchen, but Hermione giggled when she was finally sighted and Remus started to stammer and blush before rushing out of the kitchen.

"Wotcha, Hermione?" Tonks greeted.

"Hello, Tonks."

Hermione was uneasy and kept her hand near where her wand was stashed. She didn't know whose side Tonks was on, even if it seemed that she and Remus had some sort of relationship. Tonks was smiling, but her eyes were dead serious, and her hand was also hovering near her wand.

"So…um, you and Remus?"

"Yeah, isn't it great?" Tonks bounced on her toes, and her eyes went from serious to mischievous. Hermione recognized that she was in no danger and dropped her hand and relaxed. Only then did Tonks pull her hand away from where her wand rested in her back pocket. "And what about you and Severus, huh? Tell me all about it!"

"What?" She allowed the shock to show on her face.

"Yeah, Sirius has been harping on about how a brilliant witch like you has allowed yourself to be sucked in by Severus' nonexistent charms… But I say, Severus is dead sexy, isn't he?"

"Is Sirius here?" Hermione asked calmly. Tonks grinned and nodded. Hermione turned around and went to stand in the hall. "SIRIUS BLACK! You come down here and face me!"

Of course all that yelling woke up the portrait of Sirius' mother, and her caterwauling echoed throughout the house, waking up the other portraits and bringing the noise level up a painful degree. Sirius came bounding down the stairs and shut the portrait's curtains, ignoring the insults thrown at him and Hermione. "Merlin, Hermione. You've woken the dead with your yelling. What's wrong? Is it Harry?"

By this time Remus had returned, composed, except for the slight pink tinge to his cheeks. He and Tonks stood back to watch.

"How dare you! How could you tell people about my feelings for Severus? H-how could you?" Hermione was starting to feel panicked and slightly lost because of that fool Severus, and now Sirius had gone and told more people that she had a ridiculous attraction to the idiot. She felt her eyes swimming with tears and couldn't seem to stop the flow.
"I'm sorry, Hermione. I didn't know it was supposed to be a secret—hey, I'm really sorry!" He quickly moved forward when Hermione's chin dropped and started to tremble, and then she broke out in tears. "I only told Remus and Tonks," he went on desperately, hating to see Hermione cry sad tears. "And Remus already knew. Please don't cry!"

"Move back, you!" Tonks shouldered her cousin away and put an arm around Hermione's shoulders, leading the younger witch into the library.

"We'll take some tea, please," she called over her shoulder.

"I'll bring it," Remus offered.

"Thanks, love."

The witches went into the library and Tonks let Hermione cry until Remus came with the tea, and then hastily departed. While Hermione wiped her eyes with a lime green handkerchief Tonks had passed to her, the Metamorphmagus poured a good amount of Firewhiskey into the teapot.

"First, I just want to say that we are still friends, Hermione, okay?" Tonks passed the bushy haired witch some tea and smiled when Hermione took a large gulp despite the heat of it. "I'm still Harry's friend as well. So you shouldn't be afraid to talk to me. I know there are things you can't possibly discuss with me, and that is completely understandable. But we are still girls, and this is time for a girl talk. So spill!" Tonks poured herself some tea and drank while waiting for Hermione to speak.

"I am in love with a snarky stubborn bastard who only thinks of me as an immature brat."

"I doubt that's what he thinks of you. It's impossible to look at you and not see a woman. Sorry, go on."

Hermione blushed at the compliment. "He…kissed me, at Harry's birthday party. He kissed me. But directly after, he said it was a mistake. He didn't apologize, and he made it seem as if it were my entire fault! And now he keeps sending me mixed messages…"

"How?"

"He gets very jealous whenever I'm around…. erm…. whenever I'm in the company of a certain man. And he's always acting possessive, but he refuses to acknowledge his feelings, or the way he's hurting mine. It burns me up inside, Tonks." Hermione went back to sipping her tea. She tasted the Firewhiskey and didn't mind one bit that it was there. In fact, she nicked the bottle where it had been sitting beside Tonk's chair and poured another shot in her tea. "It's very frustrating and I just don't know what to do."

"I can understand. Do you know how long it took for me to get Remus' attention? Ages I tell you! Ages! He was very stubborn. As if I care whether he's a werewolf or not! As if I care he's older!" Tonks snorted and shook her head, though she was smiling fondly at the thought of Remus.

Hermione smiled. "But you have him now. I'm happy for you."

"Yeah, he finally got a clue. But let's get back to snarky Snape. Are you sure of his feelings?"

Hermione bit her lip, and then shook her head. "No. Not one hundred percent."

"Hold on, Hermione, I'll be right back." Tonks jumped up and ran to the kitchen where Remus and Sirius were talking.
"Do you guys know if Sev has any real feelings for Hermione?"

Sirius scowled. "I'm afraid he does."

"No need to make that face, cousin. You married Lucius Malfoy."

"She's right, Padfoot. You have no right to criticize. And yes, Severus certainly has very strong, real feelings for Hermione…. Why?"

Tonks grinned and waved goodbye at them and hurried back to Hermione. "You know he must be scared, Hermione. I doubt he's ever really pursued a woman before. He's never been in the position to. His life is very dangerous and he's the type of wizard who doesn't want to include anyone into that if he doesn't have to. You shouldn't let it bring you down."

Hermione nodded her understanding. "Earlier, I had decided to become the pursuer, but I've lost my confidence. He can get so angry and unapproachable that I get scared."

"It's easy to be scared of the one you love. One way or another, the one you are in love with is the scariest most dangerous person on earth. But you can't let that frighten you away. You want him?"

Hermione nodded. "Then you make it impossible for him to ignore you."

"I don't know how…well I do, but I'm not that type of girl. I don't know how to charm men, or dress to impress and all that rubbish. I mean, look at my hair! It's a rat's nest."

"No way! Your hair is so soft! I love it!" Tonks proved her point by burying her hands in Hermione's hair and changing her hot pink hair to look exactly like Hermione's. "Oh, I know! We'll go visit my mother tomorrow. She can help. Give you pointers. What do you say? Would you like to?"

"I don't know…"

"I promise it will be fun!"

"I don't want to have to change myself to get Severus. He should want me the way I am."

"As I've been told, he already does. And I'm not talking about changing you. Just tweaking you up a bit. He is a man, after all. You want him or not, Hermione?"

"Yes. All right," Hermione answered, still a bit reluctantly. "We'll go visit your mum tomorrow."

Tonks beamed at her and they resumed drinking their tea. Hermione had to admit, getting a little makeover sounded fun and exciting, and talking to Tonks had made her feel loads better.

The next day Hermione made a quick trip to the graveyard to check on her boys, and they seemed to be fine. An electric blue light surrounded everything within the circle, and Hermione could see ribbons of magic swirling around the *Ukatae* and the silver cauldron, and occasionally a ribbon would drop into the potion and would remain there. Hermione itched to be able to look in the cauldron to see what was happening, but resigned herself to the fact that it was impossible.

Harry and Draco were statues of glowing blue light. The light from their eyes seemed to surround them and made them seem like ethereal beings. Hermione spoke a few minutes with Lucius and Amortia, and completely ignored Severus, who seemed to prefer it that way, as he was still very angry with her. The night before, when he had gone to find her to inform her he was not gay, she began to speak quickly before he could start, and reassured him that she didn't care if he was gay, and that it didn't lower her esteem of him… so on and so forth, and never gave him a chance to
speak. She quickly escaped back to the others when she had seen the anger about take him over. She
didn't know if she was convincing, but it kind of looked like Severus was beginning to believe she
actually considered him a gay wizard. Which was why she'd walked back to the circle with a smile
on her face. A frustrated angry Severus was a beautiful thing.

And now, in the early afternoon, Hermione found herself with Tonks, standing in front of
Andromeda Tonks in their nice home, and she was more nervous than she thought she should be.

"Mum, this is Hermione Granger and she needs an older witch's advice."

"Oh, yes. I've heard so much about you Miss Granger," Andromeda replied, coming forward to
shake the young witch's hand.

Hermione smiled. "Please call me Hermione."

"And what do you need advice on?"

"Well…I…erm?" Hermione looked at Tonks, not sure what to say. Tonks smiled brightly at her
mum.

"Our Hermione seems to be in love with Severus Snape, Mum. But he's being a stubborn git about
the whole thing."

Hermione stared wide eyes at Tonks. She hadn't expected for her to tell her mum exactly why they
were there.

"Oh, I see." Andromeda frowned a little. "I'm sorry you are in that type of situation, but I don't see
how I can help." Hermione's shoulders dropped.

"No, mum, you don't understand. Severus has feelings for Hermione as well. It's not just one sided."

Andromeda's frown disappeared. "Really, well that's wonderful! Severus needs a good woman. I've
always said that."

"Only he's being very stubborn. Hermione needs help capturing his undivided attention, so that's
why we're here. For your help."

Andromeda nodded and circled Hermione, looking her up and down. "I don't see anything that
ought to be changed. You're a lovely young woman, Hermione."

Hermione breathed a sigh of relief. She hadn't wanted to change herself that much just to get
Severus. The thought seemed beneath her to even try, and she didn't think Severus would like it
much either. "Let's forget about obtuse men for a moment and focus on you. Is there anything you
want to change, dear? Something that would make you feel better about yourself?"

Hermione thought about it and could only come up with one thing. "I'd like to be able to tame my
hair, but it takes so long. And I don't want to change it all that much. I don't want to keep it straight. I
like my curls." Hermione sighed. "I'm sorry, I think I'm wasting your time. Maybe I should try
something else to get his attention…"

"Have you ever seen my sister Narcissa?"

"Yes." Hermione tried to keep the venom out of her voice, but failed miserably. Andromeda smiled,
not at all offended.
"Her hair is not naturally straight. In fact it's a bit like yours before she straightens it, and she has to do it every day. You don't think she uses Sleekeazy's Hair Potion every morning do you?"

"No, she would never leave the house otherwise. It takes hours! What does she use?"

"A very expensive magical device. You can get it only in Paris. Would you like to go with me and get one?"

Hermione thought about it. She still had plenty of Galleons left over from when Harry gave her some so she thought she had plenty of money, and she would really love to be able to fix up her hair every day. "Yes, I would love to. And can I get a haircut?"

"Of course."

Hermione had just enough money to by the enchanted comb that would be able to style her hair any way she wanted in a matter of minutes. She understood, after checking the price tag, why she had never heard of it before. It was nearly as expensive as the new top of the line broom, the Firebolt Xpress, which was dubbed the FireboltX by the Quidditch junkies. She promised herself, after buying the comb, that she would pay Harry back, even if it took her years. And she was sure it would take her years. He had given her a great amount of Galleons.

Hermione had thanked Andromeda and Tonks many times before rushing home to try out the new comb on her newly cut hair. Her hair was cut shorter to brush her shoulders, and she had it layered so that it framed her face in soft waves. Hermione nearly cried at how easy it was to style her hair, and she was very pleased with the outcome and couldn't wait to see Severus' reaction. Though she didn't hold her hopes too high, as this was Severus she was thinking about.

She didn't return to the graveyard until the next day, having been reassured by Amortia by owl that the boys appeared to be fine. They would be coming out of their trance soon to add the last ingredient to the potion, and hopefully that night, Voldemort would rise from the cauldron with a new, solid, and non grotesque body. As tonight was marked as a very special occasion, Hermione dressed for it by putting on a nice set of formal burgundy robes. Draco had persuaded her to buy them when they'd been in Diagon Alley last and he really hadn't had to push that hard, as Hermione loved the color and design; the cut hugging her form rather nicely, and she liked the way the soft fabric swished around her feet.

When she arrived in the Little Hangleton graveyard at half past six in the evening, Hermione was shocked to see many more Death Eaters in attendance than there had been two days prior and she hesitated just on the inside of the barrier. She could take on a couple of Death Eaters, sure, but a dozen? And already some of them had spotted her and were nudging the others. She blew out a breath when it became obvious that no one really recognized her, except for Lucius and Amortia, who were walking over towards her. Severus could be seen standing just outside the Ukatae circle, watching his nephew and godson carefully. Hermione was glad to see she wasn't the only one dressed in her best for the occasion. Everyone was dressed formally tonight.

"Hermione? Is that you?" Amortia asked. The Healer had let her hair down and it hung down to her waist in soft tame waves and she was dressed in very beautiful sparkling blue dress robes. "You look beautiful."

"Thank you. As do you, Amortia."

"Yes, you both look lovely." Lucius bent over her hand and kissed it. He pulled back and studied the nervous face that was framed by soft wavy hair. She'd gotten it cut, obviously. It hung down to her shoulders, where it used to be past her shoulder blades, and it framed her face perfectly, bringing out
her cinnamon eyes and pink lips. Lucius looked over his shoulder at Severus for a moment. When he
turned back to the anxious Gryffindor, he smirked.

"You look nervous."

"There are a lot of Death Eaters here, Mr. Malfoy."

Amortia snorted. "You have nothing to worry about. In fact, they all fear you now. It got around that
you are the Dark Lord's new student. If they look at you the wrong way, it's probably because they
are jealous."

Lucius nodded. "And should one of them do something to offend you, please tell us," he said lowly.
"We will not put up with it. Or, and I prefer this, you can hex whoever you want. I enjoy seeing
Gryffindor's know-it-all going evil. You and Harry and Ginevra Weasley. What a delightful
surprise."

"I'm glad you only like us for our entertaining abilities, Mr. Malfoy," Hermione replied dryly.

Lucius' eyes went wide and then he began to shake his head. "No, no, no. Do not misunderstand me.
I do find your skills and reactions entertaining, but that is not all. You are just different from what
Draco had reported before he grew a backbone and decided to defy me. It is a pleasure knowing
you. Honestly." Lucius took Hermione's arm, and they made their way over to Severus. Hermione
noticed Lucius purposefully made their path directly through the center of the throng of Death Eaters
so that they could all get a good look at her and see how well Lucius had accepted her.

"Who is this, Malfoy?" one Death Eater asked as they passed. "Is this the mud…err…" the man had
the good sense to back away from Hermione when she glared at him, her wand appearing in her
hand. "Is this the muggleborn Lord Voldemort has taken under his wing?"

"Why don't you ask her yourself?" Lucius drawled.

"Well, are you?" another man asked harshly. Hermione didn't like his tone and she narrowed her
eyes on him.

"I am Lord Voldemort's apprentice, yes." Those around then shifted and murmured disquietly at the
easy way in which she spoke the Dark Lord's name. "Hermione Granger. If you speak about me,
then that is how you will refer to me. If I hear the word mudblood or even muggleborn in my
presence again, that person will end up just like McNair. And for clarification, I went easy on him.
Everyone is due a second chance, isn't that right, Mr. Malfoy?"

"Impeccably put, Hermione." He looked at the other Death Eaters. "You've all been warned. This is
your second chance."

Lucius pulled her along and enjoyed the murmuring spreading through the ranks of the low ranking
Death Eaters. "That is why I've come to enjoy your company. You are a strong woman."

Hermione couldn't stop the blush appearing on her face, and she was still flushed when they came to
stand next to Severus. The Potions Master nodded to Lucius and only spared Hermione a glance.
She felt her heart drop. But then he spun around to gawk at her. Must have taken a second for him to
comprehend who he was looking at. Hermione pretended to be looking at Harry and Draco while
Severus studied her. She grinned when Severus grabbed Lucius' arm and moved away from her.

"What have you done to her? What are you playing at?" Severus demanded. Lucius raised an
eyebrow.
"I haven't done anything to her. She came that way. I haven't seen her since yesterday. Isn't she lovely?"

"Well yes…" Severus took a moment to study Hermione's back, and had to clear his throat before speaking again. "But that is beside the point."

"You should tell her. You should go over and tell Hermione she looks beautiful."

"No."

"You're being stupid, Severus."

"I'm not going to do it!"

"Merlin, it's like we're back in school again." Lucius sighed and crossed his arms over his chest. "You're going to continue to consciously hurt her? I cannot comprehend why you are doing this. Trying to remain unaffected…Forget the Dark Lord, I've seen some of the younger Death Eaters staring at her with interest since she arrived. And now that they all know she's the Dark Lord's apprentice, they'll be battling each other for her affections. And don't try and tell me you don't care! I can see you do."

Lucius left Severus when he caught sight of Sirius after the Animagus Apparated in and only managed to stop the broad smile that threatened to explode across his face at the sight of his husband. He was very glad to see Sirius had dressed in the formal robes he'd laid out for him because half the time Sirius never listened to Lucius when instructed to wear certain things for special occasions.

Severus stood alone and glared at the ground, his dark straight hair hiding his face from the world. What was he doing? Why couldn't he allow himself to be with Hermione? He wanted her, yet something was keeping him at bay. But he couldn't go to her; he couldn't give her an explanation until he figured out why he thought he should stay away.

He studied her again once returning to the *Ukatae* circle. Lucius was correct. It was wrong to hurt her. She needed to know how he felt and why he had to stay away. But she frightened him. He was man enough to admit it. He hadn't been this afraid to express how he felt to Harry when it was discovered that they were related. But this was a completely different situation.

He was about to ask Hermione for a moment alone when Harry and Draco began to move. At first they closed their eyes and their soft breathing turned into panting. And then their eyes opened and they blinked rapidly before looking around. Harry grinned when he spotted everyone outside the circle.

"Harry?"

"I'm good, Hermione. Draco?"

"Good here. Time for the last part."

Harry nodded and they backed away from the cauldron, dropped to their knees at the edge of the circle and began rubbing their hands together before slapping their palms down onto the ground. The earth began to tremble again, but not with as much force as the first time and the blue light around them began to slowly fade away, most of it sinking into the cauldron.

"What are they doing now?" Hermione asked.

"Bidding goodbye to the elementals. And now they will add the unicorn blood. This is a pivotal
point. If the blood of the unicorn doesn't accept that Voldemort has paid enough, the potion will explode. But if it reacts well, then everything will be fine and Voldemort will awaken in a bubble, and he will be able to form the body however he wants it to look. The blood will help cleanse the new body and help piece back his soul."

Draco and Harry moved around the cauldron, peering into it and grimacing. Harry knelt down to pet Nagini, who hissed delightedly at him. "It's not pretty in there," Draco commented.

"Yeah, it looks like shredded meat; raw and bloody." Everyone who could hear grimaced. "Does that mean it's not working?"

"I imagine that's how it's supposed to look until the Dark Lord can wake and work his own magic to form a body around his soul."

As everyone knew how important this last step was, all the Death Eaters moved to stand around the Ukatae circle, watching intently, everyone's eyes gleaming from the light the Ukatae were unknowingly admitting from their bodies.

"Those are the markings the unicorn spoke about," Severus said, pointing at Harry's right arm, where a blue light was shining through his robes. "She said they've had those markings since birth."

"How is that possible?" Sirius wanted to know. Severus shrugged.

"If this doesn't work, we'll have to run before the cauldron explodes," Draco said as he brought the potion to boil once more.

"It's going to work, Draco. I know it will." Harry pulled the unicorn blood out of his robes. "Ready?" Draco nodded and watched as Harry poured the blood in. Everyone held their breaths and waited. No one knew how long it would take before the outcome was apparent. It took only five seconds.

"It's working! He did it!" Harry cried out suddenly. "Tom's getting a new body!"

Harry was so excited he forgot they were surrounded by an audience and pulled Draco into an impassioned embrace and kissed his mate heatedly. Draco didn't much mind. When they separated, they both stared into the potion. It was starting to turn a pearly white but the smell was awful and they had to back up a few paces. The top began to congeal before suddenly erupting into a fiery blaze. Everyone gasped and backed away, expecting the worst, but Harry and Draco remained where they were, apparently unconcerned.

"Supposed to do that, I guess," Sirius said.

They watched as the fire turned a bright shining green, the exact shade of Harry's eyes. The two Ukatae approached their family but did not step over the drawn line. They looked very pleased with themselves. Hermione looked down when she saw movement, and shuddered when she saw it was Nagini, coiling between Harry's legs. Obviously the big snake was very fond of the Gryffindor now.

"What happens now?" she asked breathlessly.

"We let the potion finish. Tom will appear at the exact time he went in two days ago. So that gives the potion and Tom four hours to work magic." Harry looked Hermione up and down. "You look stunning, Mione. I love your hair!"

"Thanks, Harry. Tonks' mum showed me a place where they have these fantastic items…"
Draco moved away to talk to his father and a glowering Severus. "Seems Harry and I are underdressed. Are we going to a party after this?"

"You know the Dark Lord, son. He's going to want everyone to see this accomplishment and immediately. Many Death Eaters are here, but once we return to the manor, I suppose it will turn into a grand event, and all of his followers will be called. Don't worry. I've had the house-elves lay out formal robes for you and Harry once you get home. Unless you two will be too tired?"

"No. We're fine. Probably have too much energy thanks to that bogroot drink and the remaining elemental magic within us."

"You'll need to ground yourself before returning to the manor," Amortia warned. "It won't be good to hold all that natural magic inside you after the spell is complete."

Draco grinned. "We've discussed that. We'll be late to the party, that's for sure."

Amortia knew of what he was speaking of and nodded. "Yes, that will work. An excellent way of dispelling any lingering effects of the spell. And fun for you, yes?" she added with a smirk.

"No details, please," Severus grumbled.

Draco frowned at him. "What's wrong with you, Uncle Sev?"

"Nothing is wrong. I'm fine."

Draco's eyes narrowed on his godfather and Severus suddenly felt like his soul was being bared to him. Draco moved around the circle, and bid Severus to follow him. When they were halfway around and away from Hermione, Draco stopped.

"Move," he ordered the Death Eaters standing there. Some of which would have laughed in his face months ago for such an order. But as Draco was now as good as their leader as well, they immediately obeyed, leaving him and Severus alone. "I realize this has been said to you many times before, but I'm going to say it again, and with all my affection for you. Uncle Sev, you are an idiot."

"I will curse the next person who says that to me!" Severus hissed.

"Do you want to know the answer to your question? About why you can't seem to let things progress with Hermione?"

"Stay out of my head, Draco. This does not concern you."

"Yes it does!" Draco hissed back. "You're hurting my friend!"

"What do you know of it?"

"C'mon, Uncle Sev… I can feel emotions. So do you?" Draco crossed his arms and took a relaxed stance.

"Tell me."

"You are letting your fear get the best of you—"

"Tell me something I don't already know."

"Would you let me finish, for Merlin's sake?" Severus waved his hand for Draco to continue. "You are afraid of what you could be pulling her into. Just like Father was worried about what he might be
They both looked over to where Hermione was still talking with Harry excitedly, and many of the Death Eaters had gathered behind her to listen, and they seemed generally curious about her. No one looked like they wanted to do her any harm, but just in case, Lucius and Sirius were keeping a keen eye open. And Hermione seemed to be enjoying herself. Severus felt his lips form into a soft smile despite himself.

"Hermione has chosen her path, and it's the same path as yours, isn't it?"

"She doesn't know me. Doesn't know what kind of man I am…"

Draco snorted. "Please…she's had to put up with your shite since first year and she still fell in love with you. She's perfectly aware." Draco's eyes widened when he realized what he'd let slip. Severus' attention snapped away from Hermione and stared at Draco with new horror. Draco almost reached out to restrain Severus from moving away, but pulled back just before he breached the circle.

"Did you just say…she loves me?" Severus croaked.

"Fuck!" Forgetting about his Malfoy breeding, Draco spun away from Severus and pushed his hands through his hair. He realized he might have just pushed Severus farther away with that bloody slip up. It was important that he didn't let that happen. He spun back around and walked forward until his toes touched the edge of the line. He felt the currents of magic from the circle tickling his nose.

"Don't run away from this, Severus!" He told the pale wizard. "I'm sorry I told you, it wasn't my right or my place, but now it can't be helped. Don't run. You love her too!"

"I need to think…I have to go, Draco."

"Please don't…" Merlin, Harry was going to murder him.

"I'll be back in two hours." Severus turned and walked away, Apparating once he left the protective barrier.

"Bloody hell… Harry is going to kill me." Draco suddenly had the urge to curse something, and was very disappointed that he couldn't. Not while in the drawn circle.

"What did you do?" Harry immediately asked upon seeing the scowl on his mate's face. The scowl screamed guilty at him from all angles, so he was sure Draco had done something.

"We talk about it later." Like when we're out of the circle and I can run away from you. Draco was sure to keep that thought all to himself. Harry nodded and Draco thought he'd gotten off… until his father opened his big mouth.

"Where has Severus gone?"

Draco looked around; pretending to look with everyone else, until he noticed Harry wasn't looking for Severus. He was staring hard at Draco.

You've done something. What did you do?

I'd rather not say.

Draco… Harry slowly approached his mate.

We can talk about it later…
Why has my uncle suddenly disappeared? Harry's arm flashed out and grabbed hold of Draco's collar, dragging Draco's face down to his so Harry could look directly into his eyes. Draco swallowed and tried to tell himself he wasn't afraid and completely turned on by the dark creature standing in front of him. The darker nature of the Ukatae seemed to be taking over Harry because his ears grew to more prominent points instead of the natural point, which was more rounded at the tips. His eyes were darker and the light from the fire cast dark shadows over Harry's face, making his green eyes stand out, his cheekbones more prominent...would there be no end to the amount of times they changed depending on their moods?

_I may have scared him off...maybe._

*How?*

_Could you let go of me? Everyone is looking..._ Draco didn't like being the center of attention in this type of situation when he wasn't in control, especially when it looked like his mate might rip his head off...literally.

**LET THEM LOOK!**

Draco flinched, and then scowled when he realized he flinched. Then his anger took over and he started to growl. He covered Harry's hands and squeezed. *You better let go of me, lover. I can't be responsible for what I may do...*

Harry ignored the fact that Draco's claws were out and digging into his hands. *Are you threatening me, Malfoy?*

Hermione watched her friends with mounting apprehension. It was clear they were in a silent argument, both allowing their anger to take a hold of them.

"Um, are they looking a little volatile to you guys?" Sirius asked. "It looks like they're going to fight. In a very nasty painful way."

"It's the pent up energy," Amortia replied. "I don't think they will be able to wait until they get home before they can ground. It's probably why they are letting the anger take control. Best thing to do is let them do whatever it is they need. Which means there is a likely chance they will need privacy."

"But what about the spell? Shouldn't they be concentrating on that?" Sirius asked.

"I think they've done the hard part and now all they need to do is just be in the circle. The level of energy they are giving off is still far more than usual."

"Dammit, where is Severus?"

"Come on, Lucius. Let's get everyone to leave. Have them return in two hours."

Amortia and Lucius quickly went around the circle, pulling and pushing the wizards and witches away. It was a tough task, as everyone knew the Ukatae were about to fight, and no one really wanted to miss such an occurrence. Especially when said Ukatae were mates and it was Draco Malfoy and Harry Potter.

*I will not tolerate disrespect for you, Potter. Especially when we aren't in private. You know I don't react well to that._ Draco's grip on Harry's hands tightened more and blood began to well up from the wounds he was inflict. Harry didn't seem to notice.

*Why? Because you're a bloody Malfoy and everyone should grovel at your feet?*
"I'm not your fucking slave! I don't have to do what you say!" Harry shouted and roughly pushed Draco, letting go of his collar as he did so, and watched with a blank stare as Draco fell onto his back. Harry shrugged then and turned away, licking the blood off his hand while he did so. Gods, he was so bloody hot all of a sudden. He shrugged out of his robes and noticed that everyone had gone. Didn't really care though. He was still steaming mad. Draco had some nerve; automatically assuming he would bend to his every demand. Bastard!

Harry only turned around because Nagini hissed a warning at him. He turned to look at her and only caught sight of a flash of white blond before he was tackled to the ground. Automatically he went into defensive mode and tried to beat Draco off him. He caught the blond off guard when he struck Draco's jaw and then managed to kick his mate off of him, hissing as he did so. He scrambled onto his knees and crawled over Draco.

"Why couldn't you just tell me what you did?" he screamed into Draco's flushed face.

Draco growled and punched Harry in the ribs with far more force then he'd intended, but still Harry remained above him, so next he hit him in the face and was giddy with blood lust when he saw he'd cut Harry's mouth. Harry fell onto his back and brought a hand up to touch his lips. He pulled his hand away and stared at the blood smeared across his pale hand before slowly licking it off. Draco moved to lay over him and watched Harry licking the blood off. He slapped the hand away from Harry's face with a growl.

"You're an arse, Potter," he hissed when their lips nearly touching. Harry looked into swirling silver orbs and glared back.

"Get off me!" Harry bucked his hips to try and dislodge Draco, but soon learned that was a mistake when their hardened cocks rubbed together. Draco grabbed Harry's wrists and pulled them painfully over his head.

"Stop ordering me around!"

Draco bent down and started to lick the blood away from Harry's busted lip while his free hand wrestled with the buckle of Harry's slacks. Harry tried to wrestle away from Draco's hands but halfway gave in when a blood-covered tongue probed his mouth open and plundered within. Harry was half tempted to bite that tongue off… until he felt his cock grasped in Draco's warm hand. His legs stopped their feeble kicking and he thrust up into Draco's hand.

"That's right. You know who you belong to."

"You… bloody…. bastard!"

"Keep talking, Potter…"

"You let my hands go free and you'll regret it!"

Draco let go of Harry's hands and smirked before quickly shifting over him. Harry was about to make good on his threat by swiping his claws across Draco's face, when he suddenly stopped, dropping both arms to the ground and turning into putty when Draco's tongue started to do fantastic things to his cock.

Harry clawed at the dirt beneath his fingers as Draco was intent on driving him crazy with his warm wet mouth; humming low, sending shocking vibrations through Harry's cock and straight up his spine. All the extra energy was pooling low in his belly, preparing to break free. He cried out harshly
when Draco relaxed his throat to swallow Harry's entire length. Then the bastard started growling, sending a whole new load of smoldering passion sweeping through Harry.

"I really hate you right now!" And just to prove it, Harry latched his hands into Draco's hair and started to fuck Draco's mouth, and it wasn't even two strokes in before he came with a ferocious cry that echoed throughout the graveyard. Draco had a hard time not gagging, but he maintained and milked Harry for all he was worth.

When Harry couldn't take anymore, he pulled on Draco's hair until the blond released him and slithered up his body. Their lips met and the kiss was painful, smoldering; their teeth clashed, someone bit someone and their mouths filled with blood. The taste clouded both their heads like a natural high. Draco dragged Harry's trousers down and lifted his hips and didn't say a word before he was inside Harry, stroking the brunet to a new height of passion. Draco cradled Harry's head in his hands and began to kiss him softly.

"You don't hate me, Harry."

"No."

Harry licked Draco's swollen red lips and then arched his back when Draco hit a particularly sensitive spot. Seeing Harry's reaction, Draco began to hit it again and again, groaning against his mate's mouth, his cock sliding in and out, the velvety warmth encompassing him, stretching and tightening around him. Draco's body began to tremble, the residual energy, just like Harry's, was begging to be released, and wasn't giving Draco the choice of going slow.

"Draco?" panted Harry. Glazed silver eyes met emerald. "Let's fight more often, yeah?" Harry dropped his head back to the ground and squeezed his eyes shut and missed the quick grin his mate flashed him.

"I cannot believe Severus left. He should be here," Lucius stated once again. He along with Sirius and Hermione were gathered in a cozy parlor within Malfoy Manor.

"He's probably what set Harry and Draco off," Sirius complained, and got a glare from his husband for it. "You know it's true."

"It's my fault," Hermione said quietly.

"No, Hermione. I won't tolerate you blaming yourself for the actions of that greasy bastard."

"Stop calling him that, Sirius!" She screeched and the animagus shrank back, causing Lucius to smirk. "And it is my fault!"

"It's not your fault. You may have been a part of it," Lucius said honestly, "but this isn't your fault. Men are always fighting over women, but this is different. Harry, Draco, and Severus aren't fighting over you. I assume Draco was arguing with Severus on your behalf, because Draco counts you as his friend. And Severus probably ran away. Harry got into it because he loves Severus and worried that Draco had somehow hurt his uncle. In actuality, this is all Severus' fault."

Lucius poured the distraught witch a drink and handed it to her. Hermione drank it without question. Her face immediately turned red and she started to cough as if a lung was trying to come up.

"What did you give her?"

"Only absinthe. It will do her good."
"You've lost your mind giving her that!" Sirius hurried over with some water, but Hermione pushed it away. He watched in horrifying fascination as Hermione continued to drink the very hard liquor that was still illegal in some countries.

The three sat in silence, every so often consulting the grandfather clock near the door for the time. Hermione continued to sip the strong spirit until the glass was empty. After the first sip, the effects had immediately been felt, but by the end, she was exceedingly relaxed and light headed, and started to giggle.

"Where's Severus?" she asked.

"Merlin, Luce. You've gotten her drunk!" Sirius exclaimed and Lucius smirked again.

"I'm not drunk! Well? Where is he?" Hermione jumped to her feet, clumsily trying to brush out any wrinkles off her beautiful robes. Lucius' smirk dissolved into a smile.

"I'm going to take a wild guess and say he's sulking at home," he offered.

"Thank you, Lucius. I think I'll go visit him. Wouldn't want him to get lonely…. Oh! Do you think he'll be my date tonight?" Hermione smiled brightly and stumbled over to the large fireplace.

"Persuade?" Hermione tilted her head, as if she were thinking about it. "Yes, I can do that! Thank you." She took a handful of powder and threw it into the fire. Lucius held her back until the fire had turned green. Then he helped her in.

"Snape Manor," he said to her.

"Snape Manor!" she cried, and was immediately whisked away to Severus' manor.

"That could have possibly been the worst thing you've ever done."

"Nonsense. One of them needs to lose their inhibitions, or nothing will get resolved." Lucius crossed over to his lover. "Since we have the time and are alone we might as well be productive." Lucius began to open the silver clasps of Sirius' robes. "Are you going to worry about a strong woman like Hermione or are you going to pay attention to me?"

"If I was going to worry about anyone, it would be Snape. But I don't give a rat's arse about him so I'm more than happy to pay attention to you."

Hermione tumbled out of the fireplace, both laughing and cursing her clumsiness. She stood up and dusted herself off. She knew she was drunk, damn Lucius! But she didn't care. She was a witch on a mission and she refused to leave until she got what she wanted.

"Merry?" she called. A moment later, the house-elf popped in and cringed when she saw who Master Severus' visitor was.

"Don't worry. I haven't come to lecture." Merry visibly relaxed. "Could you tell me where your master is?"
"Master is in library, miss."

Hermione grinned. "My favorite place!"

Merry nodded and giggled. She could see Miss Hermione was drunk.

"Merry will tell him you here."

"Oh no, Merry. That will not be necessary. I want to surprise him." Merry looked uncertain. Hermione knelt down so that they were looking eye to eye, and put a hand on her little shoulder. "Please. I won't tell Severus that I've seen you, and if you keep quiet, I'll stop talking about how you deserve more for all the work you do-"

"Yes, Miss Hermione! Merry will not tell!"

Hermione then headed for the library. She entered silently and sighed quietly when she spotted Severus sitting in front of the fire, brooding. Her hands went to her hair to smooth it down as she approached.

"Severus?"

Wide onyx eyes met hers and he quickly stood up, but did not approach. Hermione flushed as she studied him. She had never seen a more dashing and intimidating man. She slowly approached until she was only a few feet away. "I…you disappeared. Everyone wondered where you'd gone. We all had to leave."

"Why have you come here?"

"I was worried," she replied lightly. Far too cheerful for the mood that surrounded them. Severus studied her face and frowned.

"You've been drinking."

"I had a glass of something called absinthe that Lucius gave me." She took another step.

"Damn you, Lucius," he muttered darkly.

"Severus, I wondered…. well, forgive me if I'm too forward, but I wanted you to be my date tonight."

Severus smiled without humor. "But I'm gay, remember. Why would you want to be my date?"

Hermione's smile vanished, and he wished he'd kept silent. "But I was mad at you! I know you aren't gay."

"It's not a good idea." His gaze returned to the fire and Hermione felt her patience running away. She closed the distance until she was standing beside him.

"Please. I wouldn't enjoy it without you."
"Why?" they both understood the question meant more than what it was implying. And despite the alcohol, Hermione had a firm grasp of her feelings.

"Because it's never the same without you. My whole Wizarding life would not be the same without you." She turned away from the fire and faced him fully and placed a tentative hand on his arm. "I will not take no for an answer."

Severus looked down at the petite hand on his arm and then into her bright eyes.

"Please don't be afraid of me, Severus. I'm already afraid of you. I don't want to be without you anymore."

"You don't know what you're saying. You're drunk."

"I know exactly what I'm saying!" Hermione burst out angrily. "I'm glad Lucius gave me the drink! I can tell you what I feel without worrying about what you may think! I don't care anymore! You should never have kissed me if you didn't want to be involved with me. It's not fair that you opened the door and walked away, leaving me alone with the door wide open. It's not fair that you blamed it on me! It's not fair that you look at me with that hot look, but always turn away when I return it! You are a bastard, Severus Snape!"

Severus remained silent a moment. Taking in the sight of her. Of her flushed cheeks and her heaving chest as she battled with her anger. Of her flashing cinnamon eyes. "I am," he finally answered lowly, "and that's what this is about. You're far too good for me, far too bright. I don't deserve you. You're beautiful…you're beautiful in every way. I don't deserve you," he ended in a vehement whisper before collapsing into the chair and covering his face with his hands; wishing the vision in his library would leave him be to the darkness.

Hermione narrowed her eyes on him. Stubborn fool! I'll not let him shut me out! Not now that I know how he feels.

Hermione moved to stand in front of him. She took a couple of steadying breaths and remembered Tonks words about making it impossible for a man to ignore her advances.

Severus thought she would leave, but he should have known better. Hermione was a Gryffindor, and she never gave up on anything.

"Open your eyes, Severus Snape! Look at me!" Severus looked at her, found that death glare aimed at him, and was embarrassed when his cock twitched in response. Now really wasn't the time. "Do I look like a bloody child to you? DO I?"

"No, you certainly do not."

"Do I look like I can't take care of myself? Have you ever seen me unable to withstand the greatest hardships?"

Severus grinned despite himself. "You mean besides that time in your first year with the mountain troll?" Hermione's glare turned fatal and he managed a low chuckle. "No, you are very competent."

"Do you think I would be here if I weren't confident about your feelings or mine?"

"No."

"Well then?"

"Hermione-" his tone suggested he was not done trying to argue, but she'd had enough of that and thought it was well past time for action. Without any warning, she climbed into his lap. Her warmth
enveloped him, making him suck in a surprised breath.

"I've made the choice for you. You push me away now and I'll leave and there will be no looking back. It hurts too much..." She ran her fingers through his hair and smiled. It wasn't greasy at all. Her smile broadened when she noticed Severus was breathing erratically and it was very hard not to notice the twitching that was going on where his crotch was. She looked down and grinned. "Well, at least someone wants me."

Severus let his head fall back against the chair when she scooted forward so that she was flush against him. "You know damn well that I want you..."

Hermione was almost breathless. No wonder Severus was always so confident. Well at least with things that didn't concern her. She could feel how huge his cock was and found herself becoming increasingly aroused. "Show me."

"What?" He raised his head, and unconsciously leaned forward to brush his lips against hers before pulling back.

"You heard me."

"I will not make advances on you while you've been drinking. Lucius shouldn't have given you absinthe."

"Such a gentleman." Hermione's tone suggested she was not pleased that he was being so. "Then show me by being my date. At least try to be with me."

"Hermione, I don't have to try. I want to be with you."

"Then no more arguing, you snarky bastard."

"Twenty points from Gryffin-" he found his voice cut off by Hermione's sweet mouth. It was a light kiss and their tongues barely touched before she pulled away blushing sweetly. Severus was surprised at how soothing to his nerves that kiss had been. Had she known it would have that effect on him?

"Shall we go now?" she asked, removing herself somewhat slowly and provocatively from his lap.

"I think that would be best."

They returned to Malfoy Manor quickly enough, as Severus didn't like being completely alone with Hermione. He was afraid his control may snap. And to keep Hermione from flirting with him in her inebriated state, Severus had produced a sober up potion for her to take. She pouted at first, but when he threatened to take away all the extra credit work he'd promised to give her for the coming school year, she immediately took it. When she was sober he noticed that she was extremely embarrassed, and he could tell she expected him to say something snarky about her behavior, but as he really had nothing to complain about and was reluctantly pleased that she'd sought him out, he remained silent about the whole thing and allowed Hermione lead him to where Lucius was supposed to be.

They were halfway down the correct corridor when they heard the passionate cries. Hermione stopped dead, refusing to budge another inch. "Let's go somewhere else and leave them alone."

"No. I want a word with Lucius."

"But-but you can't!" Hermione started sputtering. "They're busy! You can't just walk in on them.
They are newlyweds!

"Look at my face." His face was completely blank. "Does it look like I care? If you're so squeamish about things like that then stay here."

Hermione drew herself up to her full height and glared at him. "I am not squeamish! I just think it would be rude to interrupt them."

"Yes, it would be rather rude of me."

And with that Severus continued down the corridor, amused when he heard Hermione slowly following him. Nothing would stop her curiosity. However, she did stop five feet away from the door and tried to not listen. She failed. There was something so erotic about listening that she couldn't help herself. Severus was just about to knock when he felt Hermione's presence right beside him. Looking down, he saw she was staring at the door with a mixture of embarrassment and intense interest. Then she licked her lips.

"Merlin, save me." Severus grabbed her arm and pulled her away from the door. "Would you please stop looking like that. And stop listening." He went back to the door and started to pound on it. "Lucius! I want a word!"

"Go away, Snivellus! Lucius is busy!" came the barked reply from within the parlor. Severus sneered at the door. "I really hate that mutt," he muttered. "Hermione and I will enter in one minute regardless of what you're doing!"

"I will not!" Hermione whispered furiously.

"Quiet," he hissed back.

Hermione muttered under her breath, but otherwise remained silent. They could hear Lucius and Sirius talking inside, though their tones were too quiet to hear what was being said. The door was yanked open five minutes later by a snarling Sirius.

"We were busy," he hissed. His hair was in a state of disgrace, his lips swollen, and his eyes had yet to recover from a state of passion, though now that passion had turned into furious anger.

"So we heard." Severus shifted just enough to allow Sirius to see Hermione blushing madly behind him.

"Hello, Sirius…" she couldn't even meet his eyes. Sirius sighed and opened the door wider, and Severus swept past him. Sirius moved over to Hermione.

"You okay? He didn't hurt you did he?"

"Hurt me?"

"Well, you know…he is a bastard most times. Don't want him hurting your feelings anymore, Hermione."

"Oh." She finally looked at him and smiled. "We're fine."

"You're sober too. That's good. Come in."

"I'm really sorry we interrupted."

He waved Hermione in before him. "No need to apologize. It's always easiest to blame Snape."
Hermione and Sirius took a seat across from Severus and Lucius. Severus was laying into Lucius about giving Hermione the absinthe, albeit, quietly. Lucius looked impeccable and unconcerned by his angered friend. If it wasn't for the swollen lips and the smug smirk on his face, Hermione would never have guessed he'd just been having sex.

"Quit your grumbling," Lucius finally said, having enough of Severus' harping. "I helped you out. You should be thanking me."

"I should curse you!"

"Excuse me, but don't you think we should check on Harry and Draco?" Hermione asked. "Knowing them, they probably beat each other bloody."

"That depends." Lucius sat back and crossed his legs. "I'm fairly certain it didn't end like you think it did." Sirius grinned at his husband's words. Hermione looked confused.

"What do you mean?"

"What else do they love to do beyond fighting and flying and being overly romantic with each other?"

Hermione giggled. "Oh."

"It's been about an hour and a half. I suppose we can return," Lucius said, standing.

Severus nodded and stood as well and offered his hand to Hermione. She looked shocked at first, then smiled and took it, rising from her seat. She caught Sirius' scowl but glanced back to Severus when he began to squeeze her hand. She began to get worried when the hand squeezed harder and his eyes closed tightly.

"Severus?"

"Lucius?" Sirius was at his husband's side in a second when Lucius fell to his knees clutching his arm. Severus released Hermione's hand and also fell to his knees. Hermione realized he must have let go because he was afraid of doing her hand harm, as his knuckles were turning white from the fist he was making.

"What's happening? Talk to me!" Sirius barked as he knelt down in front of Lucius and pulled his hand away from his arm.

"The Dark Mark," Severus hissed through his teeth.

"Is Voldemort calling you?"

"I don't think so. This doesn't feel like it," Lucius panted and watched as Sirius pushed his sleeve up. The Dark Mark was burning red and smoking. Over by Severus, Hermione was seeing the same thing. And she worried when the mark began to make sizzling noises and the skin started to bubble. She looked at Severus' contorted face in horror, knowing how painful it must be.

"It's destroying itself," Hermione realized after a moment of further study and looked at Severus with worried eyes. "Does this mean something went wrong with Voldemort? Does this mean he's dead?"

Severus looked into her frightened eyes. "I don't know."

"Malfoy!" The door banged open. "Something is wrong with Bluemoon!" Parkinson stopped
when he noticed Severus and Lucius were kneeling, gripping their arms as Amortia was doing. Hermione quickly crossed to him and pulled back his sleeve, ignoring his blatant hiss of disgust.

"You're not feeling any pain?"

"No." He ripped his arm away from her. "Don't touch me again, mudblood."

Despite the pain he was in, Severus got to his feet and crossed over to Parkinson, pulling the stocky man up by his collar until he was only standing on his toes. "Do not talk to her like that again. Her cutting hex will be nothing compared to what I will do to you if you do not show her respect! Is this understood?"

Parkinson nodded and Severus shoved him away. "Now, is there anyone else having problems with their Dark Mark?"

"Not that I know of."

"Gather everyone and return to Little Hangleton," Lucius said as he stood up, quickly composing himself. "Something is happening." Parkinson nodded and rushed off.

"Severus! Look at your arm!" Hermione cried. They watched as the Dark Mark seemed to rise off his skin. And then it turned to dust and fell to the floor. Lucius had a similar pile of ash by his feet as well. Severus and Lucius stared at each other in shock.

"What does this mean? Has the Dark Lord decided we aren't good enough for him now?" Lucius demanded angrily.

"I think it's the opposite, actually," Severus replied softly. "But we won't be sure until Voldemort returns."

Harry and Draco were fully dressed and sated, lying on their backs with their feet pointing in opposite directions, while their heads were side by side. They were looking up at the sky when Hermione and Amortia appeared outside of the Ukatae circle, followed closely by Lucius, Severus, and Sirius. They weren't talking and an uneasy silence surrounded them, but they preferred to remain close together regardless of the tension between them.

"You see, Hermione? They look better than fine to me."

"Harry, Draco! Come here!" Severus ordered.

The Ukatae rose and hurried over. Before anything could be said, the three Death Eaters held out their arms.

"Your marks are gone!" Harry cried out in wonder.

"Has there been any change in the potion?" Severus asked staring over Harry's shoulder at the gleaming silver cauldron. Harry shook his head.

"We looked in a minute ago but we couldn't see anything. The potion is too thick," Draco said looking back to the cauldron. "But everything is happening as it should."

"You look to be settled down now." This came from Amortia. Draco turned back and grinned at Harry, who unconsciously licked his lip where Draco had busted it. It wasn't hurt anymore, as Draco had healed it after their 'little fight' had ended.
"Yeah, we're fine," He muttered, avoiding Draco's gaze.

Draco understood that Harry wasn't looking at him, not because he was embarrassed, but because he was still upset with him. And because Draco didn't want another fight at the moment, he decided to let it slide. Harry gave everyone a small smile and went back to stand near the cauldron to talk with Nagini. Draco sighed and rubbed the back of his neck.

"Harry's mad at me and it's your fault, Severus."

"I fail to see how it's my fault. You're the one who opened your big mouth."

"Yes, but at least it seems to have done you some good." Draco pointedly looked at Hermione who stood beside the Potion Master, but thankfully was engaged in a conversation with Lucius.

"You should be silent, Draco."

"Just thank me and get it over with." He smirked and Severus scowled.

"It will be a cold day in hell."

Murmuring swept throughout the crowd surrounding the circle when Harry suddenly sprung to his feet and peered into the cauldron. "Draco!"

Draco hurried over and looked in. The liquid was changing color, turning translucent and they could see a body moving around. Suddenly an arm shot up and grasped the edge. "What? It can't be over yet. There's still an hour left to go."

"Apparently Tom doesn't want to wait."

"The body wouldn't have matured enough..." Draco's eyes widened in comprehension and he hurriedly shrugged out of his robe and held it out as the other arm came out.

Harry reached out to give Tom a hand. The Death Eaters were standing around watching silently with rising excitement. Draco and Harry stood in front of Tom so no one could see his body except for his back as he came out of the cauldron and both **Ukatae** gasped as they gazed upon the Dark Lord and his new body.

"Merlin, Tom. I didn't expect you to go that far back!" Harry exclaimed as Draco wrapped the cloak around Tom's broad shoulders. Tom reached up to pull the hood over his head to hide his face from view. He studied his hands as they came down, his light brown eyes wide with pleasure at seeing them a healthy shade and shape.

"Get me inside somewhere and send everyone to await me at Malfoy Manor," came Tom's reply in a silky baritone and then he shuddered and leaned against Harry. "That was an experience I hope to never live through again."

"Your voice is even sexy now!" Draco observed and then grunted when a carefully aimed elbow got him in the ribs."Not as sexy as yours, love. No one else's voice could make me want to throw them down and fuck for years like yours can, Harry."

Harry hummed and passed Tom to Draco, who wrapped an arm around his shoulders to support him. Harry went to Lucius and Severus and told them to get everyone back to the Manor. "Hermione, Amortia. You two can stay. He'll need you."

Severus didn't like that one bit, but as Hermione turned and gave him a reassuring smile, he didn't
stop and complain. "Just a minute, ladies. Let me undo the circle." Harry began to walk around
clockwise, his wand pointed at the burnt line, and as he walked, the line disappeared, leaving the
area looking as it had been before it had been burnt. Hermione and Amortia followed him back to
Draco and Voldemort. But the Dark Lord had his back to them and didn't turn around until it was
only the five of them in the graveyard.

"Sir?" Hermione asked carefully. "Are you alright?"

"Yes, Hermione. Everything is as it should be." Voldemort turned around and dropped the hood. He
marveled at the dark curls that fell into his eyes. He touched his face, almost fearfully.

"It won't disappear this time, Tom. You did well," Harry murmured soothingly.

"You certainly did," Hermione said. "You're so handsome!" She blushed when he smirked at her.
"Didn't I say you would make me blush?"

"My lord, will you allow me to check you over?"

"Yes, Amortia." The Healer pulled out her wand and began to scan his body. Voldemort hid the
relief he felt when she announced him better than healthy.

"Your energy is below average, but I expect that will change in a couple of hours once you are used
to your body and have rested."

Voldemort nodded and allowed himself to be Apparated into Malfoy Manor where he was ushered
into his private wing at the manor so that he could shower and change. The Ukatae stayed with him
to make sure he would be all right.

"I can't believe Voldemort ever looked like that," Draco said to Harry as they waited for Voldemort
to finish with his shower.

"I can… This changes a lot of things."

"Opens up a lot of possibilities."

Harry nodded but said nothing more. He was still semi ignoring his mate, which was getting on
Draco's nerves. "Look, Harry. If you have something to say, then say it!"

Harry barely glanced at him. "Don't know what you're talking about."

"Are you trying for another fight? Because I would be glad to accommodate you. There's a bed right
here!"

Harry hissed and moved away from him. "Not everything can be solved by having sex, Draco."

"No, but at least it will get you relaxed enough to tell me what the hell is wrong with you. I'm not
mad anymore, so why are you?"

"I'm not your slave," he replied quietly. "But sometimes I feel like it. I hate that feeling… it reminds
me of the Dursleys."

"Who said you were my slave? You don't have to do anything you don't want to. You don't take
orders from anyone, Harry! I never want you to feel as if you have to do something just because
someone tells you to. Never!"

Draco wanted to go to Harry, but knew he would have to wait for Harry to come to him. He'd
always been expecting a conversation like this; for Harry's horrid past to barrel its way into their lives. He knew it had to happen before they could truly move on. Harry turned to look at him. Finally more than just a glance.

"I'm sorry I'm so possessive," Draco went on. "But I can't help it. It's taken us years to get to where we are, to have what we have. I just never want to lose that."

Harry visibly relaxed. "You say certain things just to get a rise out of me, don't you?"

Draco grinned. "Yeah, it's so easy. But some things I say are the truth."

"Like what?" Harry sat down between Draco's legs and let his head fall back against the seat. Draco's fingers were immediately in his hair, massaging away the tension that had built up.

"Like the fact that you-you're with me." Harry grinned. He knew damn well Draco was thinking the words *belong to me* when he spoke the words *with me*. But that suited Harry fine. That wasn't the problem. If anything, he was more than happy to say he belonged to Draco. It made him feel loved and protected. "And that you're an idiot Gryffindor," Draco went on. "And you punch like a girl."

"I do not!" Harry pulled his head away and turned to glare at Draco, who wore a wicked grin. "Whatever." He leaned back and sighed. Harry supposed now was as good a time to talk about his fears. He didn't noticed that Tom had come back from the shower, already immaculately dressed, and was hovering in the shadows of the doorway.

"I was always locked up in the cupboard under the stairs before I got my Hogwarts letter. The Dursleys were so afraid of magic and the fear that someone would come to complain about where I was kept that they moved me into the small room upstairs. The one that was usually used for Dudley's old broken toys." Harry's laugh was dry. "I was worth less than old broken toys. When the letters from Hogwarts came I didn't know what it was because Vernon refused to let me see them. I wanted to see them so badly because they were addressed to me. Someone in the world knew me, was acknowledging my existence. That's all I ever wanted…acknowledgement from them, something that let me know they knew I really existed. That's why I did everything they wanted. I thought if I could show them how important I could be to their lives, they might love me. So I basically became their slave."

"They used the insecurities of a little boy desperate for love." Draco's claws came out and started to bite into Harry's skull. Harry reached up and brought Draco's hands to rest around his chest. Draco dropped his chin on Harry's head.

"I cooked all their meals, cleaned the entire house daily, and did the gardening, the laundry, the shopping… It started so early in my life that I can't remember a time when I didn't do that stuff. I wanted everything to be perfect so that when Vernon came home I wouldn't have to worry about his anger. Nothing ever worked. Even if everything was perfect, he always found a way to beat me down. After fifth year, they put me back in the cupboard because they were afraid of what I was becoming and the abuse escalated after that.

"Vernon enjoyed hitting me, spewing his words of hatred. I was nothing." Harry's chin dropped to his chest. "Before Hogwarts, I was alone all the time, even when I was surrounded by people. I couldn't have any friends; Dudley always chased them away. I never had anything for myself. I was a slave in every sense of the word. That night you and Uncle Sev found me, Vernon was hell bent on killing me because he knew after my birthday I would leave and never return. He hated me so much that he couldn't just let me go. By that time, I knew I was nothing, and I didn't care that I was dying. I wanted to die. My friends were gone; my life seemed already over before it had begun…. You know the rest."
"You're amazing," Draco said after a time of silence. He tried to keep his anger out of his voice. The damn Dursleys needed to pay.

"What?"

"I said you are amazing. Even after all that, you persevered though, didn't you? You didn't allow yourself-"

"Draco, I would have died without you. I don't know if I would have left that coma otherwise. I had thought about it. I wanted to make sure people were safe from Voldemort, but I don't know if I would have left if you hadn't come."

"I know you would have come back, even without me. It's not in you to give up, is it?"

Someone cleared their throat. Harry and Draco looked up to find Tom standing in the doorway, his face impassive, but Draco recognized the anger in his eyes. He must have been listening to the whole thing. Draco wondered what Voldemort would do now that he'd heard how Harry had grown up.

"We were never that different. I wish I had known that."

"No worries, Tom. That's all in the past." Harry stood up, feeling much better for having talked to Draco. And he wasn't even that upset that Tom had been eavesdropping. Maybe it was a good thing that he had heard too. "You ready to go down and shock everyone?"

Harry grasped Draco's hand and pulled him towards the door. Silver eyes met brown and the unspoken words passed between them. They would be having a discussion about the Dursleys, and in private.

It was a gala of sorts, Hermione supposed, looking around at all the well dressed wizards and witches mingling together in the large ballroom of Malfoy Manor. Many who were in attendance were very high up in the Wizarding Government, and they all had ties to Voldemort. Severus had left her with Sirius while he and Lucius discussed things, making sure everyone knew why they were all gathered and what to expect. Some people just plain didn't believe the Dark Lord had returned with a new body. Many believed Harry and Draco had destroyed him and were now prepared to take over. Hermione only laughed.

Even Bellatrix had been allowed to attend but her magic was bound, wrapped up tight so that she couldn't do anything with her wand. But Bellatrix still had her fun by annoying Hermione until the Gryffindor witch sealed Lestrange's mouth shut. On several occasions Hermione had to put herself and her abilities on display so that everyone understood part of the reason why she was there. She couldn't contain her amusement when she and Sirius were recognized with shock and then disdain. This coming from the elite wizards and witches, all of which refused to accept her until she'd had to prove that she wasn't afraid of anyone.

"Stop looking at me like that, Sirius. It's not like I'm turning into a Dark Lady or something."

"Can't help it. You seem so different now."

"You think it's bad?" she took a sip of her champagne to ease her nerves.

"No! Good Merlin, no!" Sirius threw an arm around her shoulders and hugged her to his side. "We all need you to be strong, don't we? Especially that git over there." Sirius pointed a finger in Severus' direction. Hermione refrained from replying.
This was supposed to be a date, right? So why did it seem like Severus was purposely putting distance between them again? It had been happening the entire night. He had hardly said two words to her since arriving at the graveyard and if it weren't for the looks he kept sending her, she would have thought he changed his mind about her. But those looks expressed all she needed to be reassured. Hermione supposed he was just trying to come to grips with how he felt and how he would progress with their relationship.

"Are you sure you want Snivellus? There are better wizards…better wizards with better looks."

"Sirius, I've made my decision. Besides, there is no better wizard for me. And he has very distinguished looks."

The Animagus snorted. "That's a very nice way of saying you don't care that he's ugly."

"He isn't ugly."

"Yeah, whatever…"

The tension in the ballroom suddenly spiked and all movement stilled for a moment before heads began to turn to the stairway at the ballroom doors. Harry and Draco stood at the top with a cloaked figure standing in front of them. While the Ukatae were dressed in black formal robes, the hooded figure standing in front of them was cloaked in blood red. No one dared utter a word as the three descended the stairs, and the crowd silently split in two as the three swept past them all and headed for the raised dais at the other end of the large room. Hermione and Sirius moved towards the dais and stood off to the side. Hermione wanted a good vantage point to see all the faces in the crowd when Voldemort removed his hood. When they were on the dais, Harry and Draco stood at each side of Voldemort, smirking at all the patiently waiting faces.

"Those of you who no longer have the Dark Mark will join me now," Voldemort commanded. His voice alone startled the crowd. It was low and smooth and commanded immediate attention. Everyone began to look around. No one knew what he was talking about, but when Lucius, Severus, and Amortia climbed the dais to stand beside Harry and Draco, the quiet murmuring resumed.

Hermione was startled when Voldemort looked at her. "You as well."

The room erupted into chaos when Hermione climbed to stand beside Severus, who gave her a reassuring nod and placed a hand at her lower back. She didn't think anyone aside from Severus noticed when she leaned into him a bit. She was a little wary of what was about to happen and kind of uncomfortable with the entire room staring at her with such looks, though she made sure not to outwardly show it. Severus seemed pleased and allowed his hand to move over around her back to lightly grip her hip in support. Voldemort allowed the furious whispers and accusation to roam around the room. It was pretty clear what everyone was saying. There was no way their Dark Lord would have invited a mudblood up to join him.

"Silence," he finally stated. When he had everyone's attention, Voldemort pulled back his hood. "I am Lord Voldemort."

The look of shock on everyone's faces was enough to make Hermione start to giggle, but she shut up when the hand on her hip squeezed lightly. Not only did Voldemort form a perfect body, but also he'd chosen to revert back to the age of eighteen. He looked exactly as he did at the end of his seventh year. His form was tall and straight, standing the same height as Draco. His dark hair was a bit wavy and was swept away from his handsome aristocratic face. There was a cold smile on his face and in his brown eyes as he surveyed the crowd.
"Does anyone dispute my existence?"

One could have heard a pin drop. Many in the crowd recognized this as Tom Riddle, as they had gone to school with him. They were old now of course, but they were quick to squash any doubts of the younger generation around them. This was their Dark Lord.

"Usually I will not explain myself or my actions, but for tonight, I will explain why these witches and wizards stand by me and do not bare my Dark Mark. They have proven their loyalty to me beyond any doubt." Voldemort held his hand out to Hermione, and after a little push from Severus, she took his hand and allowed him to draw her to his side. "I trust these people beyond anything. They do not bow to me. Should anyone have a problem with this, please feel free to say and you may leave."

Harry snorted quietly. Tom was not about to let anyone walk away without losing their lives. Tom needed to prove he was still their Dark Lord. Harry wondered who would be stupid enough to test him. He didn't have to wait long.

"How are we supposed to believe you’ve allowed half-bloods and mudbloods to stand with you?” a tall wizard yelled from the middle of the crowd, many around him nodding. "I want nothing to do with mudbloods!"

Tom looked at Hermione and noticed her frown. He didn't like seeing her frown.

"Do you want to leave?" he asked the wizard

"Yes."

"I as well." There was a murmur of agreement from a quarter of those present, and those who did not like what was happening banded together in the middle of the ballroom.

Making themselves easy targets, aren't they? Harry asked. The blond's smirk grew and he and Draco drew their wands, just as Tom did.

"That is fine. You will go." He flicked his wand and the objectors were immediately surrounded by fiendfyre. Those around them hurriedly scurried away and pressed themselves against the walls, knowing how dangerous and volatile fiendfyre was. Hermione unconsciously firmed her grip on Voldemort's hand.

"Do you wish me to stop?"

"No. You must do what you must. I just know how dangerous fiendfyre is. It is very hard to control." She closed her eyes against the screams of pain and terror coming from those the fiendfyre was consuming. But after a moment, she made herself look. She didn't want anyone to think she was weak.

"We can control it, Hermione. It will not move on to anyone who is not the target," Draco murmured.

Voldemort flicked his wand and the fire vanished, leaving a pile of soot where the unbelieving Death Eaters had stood.

"Well that was exciting," Lucius announced. "Do you think anyone has any doubts anymore?" His voice carried across the crowd.

"I very much doubt it," Hermione said, equally loud, smirking at all the faces staring at her. "They
would be ignorant disgraces to this organization and we can't have that, can we Voldemort?"

"No, we cannot." Voldemort smiled at her. "You may continue, Hermione."

Harry grinned as he felt the surprise and shock swimming around and snickered when Hermione pulled out her wand and pointed it at a Death Eater close to the dais. The witch backed up quickly when Hermione smirked. "Do you doubt our abilities? Do you doubt mine?"

"No," the witch hurriedly said. "You are the Dark Lord's apprentice. No one could doubt you."

"Does anyone hear think that just because I'm a muggleborn that I do not have the capability of killing you without blinking?" In actuality, she didn't think she could kill someone just for the sake of killing, but they didn't need to know that. And no one seemed to want to test her. Hermione was very convincing.

*I think Hermione is having fun,* Draco said.

Harry nodded and looked at his uncle. Severus was trying very hard not to smirk, and Harry was amused to see that he had to shift and pull his robes around to cover the front of his body. Harry didn't have to guess at what he was trying to hide. Hermione nodded to Voldemort, and then returned to Severus' side and he immediately returned a hand to her waist. His grip was more possessive this time. She looked up at him and gasped when she caught that look in his eyes that clearly said that he wanted to take advantage of her that very second. Their attention returned to Voldemort as he began to speak again, his statement ringing throughout the room.

"I am Lord Voldemort, also known as Tom Riddle. You will bow to us." Those beside Voldemort looked at him. They hadn't expected him to include them in such a manner. But they all masked their surprise well as the entire room bent to their knees, bowing to all seven standing on the dais. Everyone was aware of the change. A new era had begun.
Tom Riddle was astounded. There was simply no other way to put it. He was astounded and speechless. He was in his darkened quarters within the Malfoy Manor with only a few candles to light up the large bedroom, and stood as still as a statue in front of a full length mirror, just staring at himself. He had had no doubts about Harry and Draco's abilities, and had known he would leave the silver cauldron with a new body, but not like this. Not this perfect body that had formed to his every wish, even down to the birth mark on his right shoulder.

He wanted to touch his face to make sure it was real, despite Harry and Draco's assurances, but he was afraid. He was so enamored with his new body that he feared it was all an illusion. Just the thought of it all being unreal made his hands start to shake. Harry and Draco had indeed given him a second chance at life. He was once again eighteen years old, in every possible way. And even though he still contained all the knowledge and memories of his former life, his mind was eighteen as well. He was a young wizard again and he knew he would never be able to repay the Ukatae for this. And that was something else. Before, he would never care about what he owed people, he simply didn't care about anyone but himself, but now, he did care about Harry and Draco; he wanted to pay them back. He would never regret his decision to work with them and become their partner. Never.

He did, however, have one grievance and that was the fact that he had a reasonable conscious once again. He actually cared about a few number of people. Hermione Granger for one. How odd was that thought? He quirked an inquiring eyebrow at himself. She was a muggleborn. And yet… that did not matter. He genuinely liked her and could honestly call her a friend. If he didn't have a damn conscious, he would have tried to court her right out from under Severus' nose. But as he knew she was in love with Severus-"Undeserving, bitter man that he is"- he would not pursue her.

Tom frowned. One of the major reasons why Severus was so bitter was because of him. Tom had made Severus do a lot of things he didn't want to. Had put the Potions Master under quite a lot of torture as well, and still the snarky wizard had done it and endured it all for his Dark Lord. Tom sighed and ran a hand through his thick dark hair, silky and fluid to the touch. At least Severus was in better spirits these days. Harry having a lot to do with that.

Thinking about Harry brought a deeper frown to form on his face. He cared deeply for Harry. He didn't know when it had happened. Perhaps when he realized Harry cared about him. Cared about him when he hadn't done anything to deserve it. He recalled the conversation he'd had with Draco about Harry's former guardians, and that frown turned into a massive scowl. They would pay for the hurt the young Gryffindor had been put through. Vernon Dursley most of all.

A knock at his door drew him away from his thoughts and he turned to the door. "Enter." The door opened and two shadows moved into the room.

"Good morning, sir. Did you sleep well?"

"Excellent morning, Hermione. Yes I slept well." Tom crossed the room and picked her hand up to kiss it, enjoying the blush that crept over her face. She was a lovely witch. If Severus didn't pounce
on her then he was an idiot. "You don't have to call me sir anymore. I'm eighteen, remember. Tom will do for you."

Hermione nodded and smiled brightly. "Is it weird?"

"Phenomenally so. But I am grateful."

"Merlin! Why's it so dark in here?" Harry immediately crossed the large chamber and began to pull the drapes away from the three large windows. Tom glared at the light flooding into his room.

"I prefer the dark. Is that really necessary?" Tom indicated the light.

"Of course. I like the sun light."

"But you're a dark creature…"

"I'm a being of nature, dark and light. And I love the sun just as much as I love the moon."

"Except when the sun tries to wake you up early in the morning," Hermione said with a smirk.

"Whatever. C'mon, Draco wants us to meet him in the library."

It was a surprise to Tom that his second return- or would it be the third?- did not make the public’s awareness, which was more than he, Harry, and Draco could have hoped. Because Tom was certain Harry and Draco had plans for him that they hadn't explained yet. But he expected that's why Harry, Draco, and Hermione wanted to talk to him in the library. Strangely he wasn't annoyed by their apparent scheming and was more curious than anything.

"Just think about all you missed when you spent all your time turning yourself into evil incarnate!" Harry exclaimed excitedly. "Think about the life you can live now being back to eighteen. That is why we think you should return to Hogwarts with us this year. Think about all we can accomplish with you at school with us. It'll be brilliant!"

Tom stared wide-eyed at the smaller Ukatae. Back to Hogwarts? He had never even thought about that possibility.

"Yeah, you're definitely coming back to school with us," Draco insisted. "Merlin, just think of all the fun we'll have."

"And how do you suggest I get into Hogwarts? I'm not on the list, and Dumbledore will recognize me."

"Not if you're a transfer, from say…Durmstrang," Hermione put in. "They don't keep the same records and you can create a powerful glamour to conceal your real looks…oh, and you'll have to change your name."

"I don't like the idea of a glamour."

"It will have to be done, otherwise Dumbledore will know. Or you can create a glamour that only effects people who you want to keep your identity hidden from."

Tom sat back and brought his fingers into a steeple under his chin as he pondered their exchange. Harry had the urge to chuckle. He still looked like Lord Voldemort.

"What sort of glamour?" Tom finally asked.
"Just a facial glamour will do I think."

"Just a minute…" Hermione's face was furrowed in thought. "I've got it!" She jumped up and clapped her hands in excitement.

"Please, tell us your brilliant plan," Tom drawled, a strange gleam in his eyes and he arched a brow at her. "I'm sure it will be enlightening."

Hermione stared at him, her gaze boring into his. "I don't know whether you're trying to be sarcastic, Tom. But I don't like your tone." Tom smirked at her.

"Come along, Mione," Harry said. "Explain."

Draco nodded. "And Tom… stop trying to get Hermione to turn violent."

Tom's smirk broadened and Hermione's mouth dropped open.

"Guys? Are you in here?" Hermione turned towards the library doors and waved as Ginny and Blaise walked in.

"Hey!" Harry called cheerfully and waved them over. He scooted over on the couch to where he was practically sitting in Draco's lap to make room for the newcomers. Ginny hurried over and gave a hug to everyone except for Tom, whom she didn't notice at first because he was sitting quietly watching the exchanges with a blank face. When she did notice him, her eyes went wide.

"Who's your new friend?" She asked her friends, then turned back to Tom, "hello, I'm Ginny Weasley." She extended a hand to the handsome boy and smiled when he took it. And then her smile upped a notch when Tom kissed her knuckles. Blaise came over and introduced himself as well, though he didn't smile at all. "Lighten up, love," she whispered. "I'm all yours, remember." After that, Blaise looked on the new guy with a little more warmth.

"Well? He's awfully quiet," Ginny said to Hermione. "Who is he? You look kind of familiar…"

Hermione smiled. "I'm not sure he wants me to tell you." She looked at Tom and he smiled.

"You've met him before, Ginny," said Harry with a frown, thinking about the incident with the Chamber of Secrets. But it seemed Ginny wasn't traumatized at all from that event, because she still didn't seem to place it together.

"Tom Riddle," the Dark Lord announced.

"Nice to meet…Oh…Oh!" Ginny covered her mouth with her hands. "Oh Merlin! It is you! I'm sorry, sir. I didn't remember."

"I would prefer if you didn't remember that time in your life," he replied as Blaise led Ginny over to sit next to Harry and Draco.

Ginny was shocked that Voldemort was actually, in his own way, apologizing for the whole diary thing. She simply nodded her head at that. "I hear we missed a great party last night. Wish I could have been there."

"Sorry, Gin. But we couldn't get your mum to change her mind," Harry tried explaining, but Ginny waved him off.

"That's all right, mate," Blaise said. "Me and Red had our own party, didn't we?" Ginny blushed and
"Mrs. Weasley let you two go out alone?" Hermione asked clearly shocked that Molly would allow her youngest to go out alone with a Slytherin.

"Yeah. I think she felt bad about not allowing me to attend here last night."

"Add to the fact that the woman adores me," Blaise said with a smirk. "And I love her cooking! I praised her about it for hours."

Harry laughed. "That'll do it!"

"So shall we continue on with what we were discussing or would you rather wait?" Hermione asked Tom.

Tom turned and pinned Blaise and Ginny with an intense stare and it was without any doubt that he was using Legilimency on them, and as this was still the Dark Lord, they were not about to put up a fight. Finally, he leaned back in his chair, a small smile playing on his lips.

"Please continue, Hermione."

"Severus says Dumbledore may be losing him mind, right? Perhaps we can use that to our advantage, if it's true. I'm thinking Tom should go to Hogwarts how he is now, without any glamour. We could drive Dumbledore mad that way. How do you think he would feel seeing Tom sitting at the Slytherin table once again when he comes in to give his Welcoming speech? Not only knowing that Tom is there now, but that he has all of us on his side. Don't you think that would start to wear on him? I mean, after everything he's done this summer, you can tell Dumbledore is losing his control."

"I think he'll alert the Ministry," Draco drawled while fingering some of Harry's silky black strands.

"Not if he realized he has to deal with it because we have that other memory. He must know we have it. And if he doesn't know, then I'll make him aware of it."

"I won't be able to enter the castle if he sees it's me."

"You can wear a glamour until you've been sorted again and drop it when he least expects it." Ginny put in, surprising all around. "What?" she asked when she noticed everyone staring at her. "Was I not supposed to say anything?"

"No. You have a good idea," Tom said with a nod.

"McGonagall may remember you…"

"Not very likely, Harry. I don't look exactly the same. I did make subtle changes."

"So, you wear the glamour until you feel like taking it off." Harry nodded and that was the end of that discussion. Because Tom was going to Hogwarts with them whether he liked it or not.

"So where is Pansy?" Draco asked, turning to Blaise. "I was surprised she wasn't here last night and I haven't heard from her."

Blaise frowned. "I haven't heard from her either, which is strange. She's always good about owling over the summer. And now especially she wouldn't keep her distance. Too much has been happening within our social groups for that."
A silence stretched out in which the *Ukatae* utilized their senses to tune in to the world around them. Something was making them uneasy as both Harry and Draco's faces portrayed their edginess.

"I don't like this." Harry stood up. "You guys know her best and I'll believe when you say it's odd. Tom, did you tell Parkinson to do something with Pansy?"

"I did not."

"We should find her immediately!" Hermione said, anxiety written across her face. "You don't think her father punished her for becoming friends with us?" she asked looking at Harry.

"If he did, he will regret it. I did tell him I wanted Miss Parkinson to keep an eye on you two." Tom called a house elf and ordered it to find Parkinson. Everyone sat in silence for the few minutes it took for Parkinson to arrive. Harry, Draco, and Hermione moved to stand behind Tom's chair as Parkinson entered the library. He was decidedly nervous as he bowed to them.

"You called, my lord." He stayed on his knees and kept his eyes to the floor.

Tom nodded and looked to Hermione. "Where is Pansy? Why wasn't she here last night?"

"Her mother has taken her to France."

"Surely you knew her attendance would have been in your family's best interest," Draco drawled.

"I did not think she would be needed."

"That is a drastic change in your attitude," Tom began, his eyes going as cold as his voice. "And what about Miss Parkinson? Does she feel the same?"

Parkinson remained silent, but Harry could see his eye twitching nervously. "Why hasn't she contacted her friends? Blaise and Draco tell me this is not normal for her."

"…it's very complicated, my Lord."

Tom rose from his seat and Parkinson cringed. "Tell us exactly where she is and why you've kept her away," he hissed, wand pointed at the shaking Death Eater's head.

"The nerve of that wizard trying to force Pansy into marriage!" Ginny exclaimed as they made their way down a wizarding street in Paris. They were a rather large and peculiar group of nine. Lucius and Sirius were along, walking at the front, accompanying the younger wizards and witches to oversee their protection, as was Severus who took the end with Hermione walking beside him. She was going on and on about how lovely Paris was and it was enough to make Severus want to snog her silly so she'd stop talking. Ginny and Blaise were walking behind Sirius and Lucius, while Harry, Draco, and Tom were behind them. It was a very weird group indeed; as most of the group was recognized, people were always stopping to stare. Thank Merlin no one nowadays knew what Tom Riddle ever looked like.

"It's not uncommon for the pureblooded families to have arranged marriages," Lucius said.

"But Pansy is being kept under lock and key. She obviously doesn't want this wedding as she's tried to escape a couple of times. Can't believe Parkinson admitted to that."

"He had no choice," Tom said quietly.

"Can we really stop this?" Harry asked. "I mean if there's been a contract already drawn up and
"Pansy is of age. She has to sign the document before anything will be official. That's probably why she's locked up. I'm sure the Parkinsons feel if they keep her isolated long enough she will cave in." Draco snorted and shook his head. "They obviously don't know their own daughter very well. Pansy doesn't do something she doesn't want to."

"Hermione, enough!" Severus suddenly said. Hermione stopped and looked up at him. Ahead of them everyone else stopped and pretended not to listen. "I've been here countless times. I know its beauty. Please cease your rambling!"

Ginny poked her head between Tom and Draco and grinned at the pair. "She's going to kill him now, right?"

"I would enjoy seeing that," Tom murmured. But Hermione didn't look like she was going to do any harm to Severus. In fact, her chin started to tremble as she looked at Severus with wide brown eyes. Tom would have thought less of her for having been brought down so quick by Severus' words, but then he caught sight of the gleam in her eyes and knew she was only pretending to be hurt. The witch was shrewd, no doubt about it, trying to bring Severus out of his ridiculously shy cocoon. Tom actually grinned when he realized what she was doing.

"I… I was only trying to talk to you, Severus. You haven't said one word to me the entire time."

Severus sighed and then caught sight of everyone who was watching them. "Mind your own business!" he snapped, and then shifted to stand in front of Hermione so that they could only see his back. He wrapped a hand around Hermione's neck, and slid it around until his fingers entangled in the hair at the back of her neck. She sighed at his touch, wishing for more.

"I'd rather not talk at the moment."

Hermione's shoulders dropped. "Oh…All right, I underst-" she squeaked when the hand behind her head jerked her forward against him, and then she melted when his mouth slanted over hers.

"I'm amazed he's snogging her in an incredibly public place," Lucius commented before turning around and continuing down the street. He noticed he was missing a husband and turned back to find Sirius scowling at the kissing couple.

"Just look, Luce. It's completely disgusting!"

"You really should-" Lucius saw the hex coming and pulled Sirius down just before it hit his head.

"That was perfect aim," Tom complemented Hermione with a nod, even though she was still kissing Severus, wrapped tightly and securely in his arms, purring into the Potions Master's mouth.

"How did she do that without even looking?" Blaise wanted to know.

"You've been teaching her stuff, haven't you, sir?" Ginny asked Tom, who nodded. They all began to proceed down the road again, leaving Hermione and Severus alone.

"Ginny, don't call him sir. He's seriously eighteen now. It's kind of creepy when you call him that," Harry said.

"Well I…" Ginny didn't know if she should listen to Harry. Just because Voldemort turned back to an eighteen year old didn't mean he didn't want to be addressed as he always was.
"Call me Tom if you wish. I am eighteen and it is weird to hear someone address me as sir. Though it wouldn't feel weird if you called me Lord Voldemort."

"Tom it is then," she returned brightly, ignoring his slight glare.

Severus pulled back and was delighted to find Hermione in a sort of stupor. "Silence at last." He took her arm and led her down the street and they soon caught up with the rest of their group.

They arrived at the Parkinson safe house shortly after. Severus, Sirius, and Lucius waited outside by Tom's orders, and the others were shown in without any trouble by a shivering squeaking house-elf. Mrs. Parkinson was waiting for them in the Entrance Hall and she looked decidedly nervous. As she was prone to do, Hermione immediately took charge and demanded to see Pansy.

"I'm afraid my daughter is not here." Mrs. Parkinson sneered at her.

"You're lying, Mrs. Parkinson," Tom said, coming to stand beside Hermione. "You're husband has already told me you've been keeping Miss Parkinson locked in a room. You will bring us to her immediately. Or you will pay the consequences."

"Who are you to demand things from me in my own home?" she demanded, taking a defensive stance. Apparently, Mr. Parkinson had failed to relate the events of the last couple of days to the rest of his family. This displeased Tom greatly.

"Your husband will be punished for his defiance, I assure you."

"Defiance of whom?"

"Mrs. Parkinson, this is Lord Voldemort," Harry finally said, getting impatient with the whole thing. "You will do as he says and bring us to Pansy."

"I don't believe you!" she shrieked. The door beside them opened and an elder gentleman came out.

"Veronica? Do you need assistance?" The newcomer studied the group as he came to stand beside Pansy's mother.

"Oh no, Tuluce. They were just leaving."

"We are not leaving without Pansy," Hermione said with a hard glare.

"I'm afraid Miss Parkinson will not be leaving," Tuluce answered as he looked Hermione up and down with a feral glint in his eyes. "We were just going over the marriage contract. Miss Parkinson will be married to me in two days time."

"No way!" Ginny yelled. "You are not going to marry your daughter off to a wizard who looks older than her father!"

"This does not concern you!" Mrs. Parkinson hissed. "And now I demand you all leave at once!"

Tom flicked his wrist, and both Mrs. Parkinson and the old French man were cast immobile. "I've had enough of your insolence!" Tom turned to the others, "go and find Miss Parkinson. Draco, please stay with me."

Draco nodded and winked at Harry before the Gryffindor went off to find Pansy. "What is it?"

"We will bring these two to Malfoy Manor, and then we're taking a trip to Surrey."
"What about Harry?"

"If he knew where we were going, he would stop us, would he not?"

"Not sure, but probably. And if that's the case then I can't just go there and do what I want to do. He'll want to beat my ass!"

"That's your problem, Draco. Do you want to go or not? I'm going. The protective magic over that house is gone and I want to meet his family," Tom ended with a nasty sneer.

"Fine, let's go."

Draco and Tom Apparated themselves along with Mrs. Parkinson and Pansy's hopeless intended back to Malfoy Manor, and hastily dropped them off in the dungeon before departing to the Dursleys.

Back in Paris, Harry led his group upstairs as he could feel Pansy's enraged emotions and was able to lead them right to her. He was soon enraged himself when he realized there was a very strong silencing spell around the room, probably so her parents wouldn't have to hear her yells of denial and demands to be let out. There was a cat flap on the door that reminded him so much of his room at the Dursleys that his anger spiked and the door was wrenched back off its hinges, the magic the Parkinsons had put on in no way a match against Harry's. The others had been a few feet away so that the door simply slammed back against the wall of the hallway. Immediately, Pansy raced out of the room, a candlestick holder clutched tightly in her hand. She dropped it when she saw who was out there.

"Oh, thank Merlin!" She raced over to Hermione and Ginny and threw her arms around them. "They wanted to marry me to a disgusting old man! I thought I was going to die! I would have killed myself!"

"Pansy, you're okay now," Harry said, patting the distraught girl's shoulder. "You're going to come live with me and Draco until school starts."

Pansy pulled away from the Gryffindor witches and looked at Harry with wide eyes. She blinked a few times in surprise. "I…Potter, you…Harry!" she shrieked, scaring the crap out of the Ukatae, then threw her arms around him. Harry would have been amused if her embrace hadn't sent a shot of hot pain through his back.

"Gah!" He hastily pulled away from her and clenched his jaw shut against the pain.

"Harry, what is it?" Hermione asked.

"My back. It's getting worse."

"What do you mean worse? You never said your back was hurting at all!"

"Well…" Harry turned away from everyone to hide his blush. He didn't know why, but he was embarrassed about the whole growing wings thing.

"What is it?" Ginny asked and Blaise nodded that he too wanted to know what was going on. Very intrigued by the blush crossing Harry's face.

"It's not a big deal…Really."

"Harry." The tone and look Hermione was giving him expressed her concern and demand that he
"I'm kind of growing wings. Like I said, no big deal."

There was silence as everyone tried to decipher in their minds what Harry had just said. He'd spoken fast, but they all understood him perfectly. Harry's blush only intensified.

"What was that, Harry? I missed it," Blaise said with a smirk.

"I said I'm growing wings. Go on and laugh. I know you want to. Just get it over with." Harry turned and walked down the hall, expecting to hear a raucous of laughter behind him. He was mildly surprised when he felt a firm arm slide over his shoulders. He looked and raised an eyebrow at Blaise.

"That's actually kind of cool, mate. Is Draco getting wings?"

"No."

"Oh. I see."

Harry caught the grin on the Slytherin's face and sighed. "Yeah, alright. I'm the submissive. Let's not talk about this again."

"Oh come on, Harry. I think it's cool you're getting wings!" Ginny bubbled as they descended the stairs. "I mean… wings! Harry's gonna have wings!" She shouted as they came into the Entrance Hall where Lucius, Severus, and Sirius waited, all three older wizards having heard the last of the conversation.

"Wings?" all three exclaimed. Harry moaned and Apparated straight back to his room in Malfoy Manor.

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Draco Apparated both himself and Tom to the front of the Dursley home, unconcerned that it was a bright sunny day and anyone could have seen them. They walked with a purpose up to the door and knocked. Draco thought they should just blast the door open, but Tom seemed to want to do things the polite way, which seemed to be extremely hypocritical. As if he knew what Draco was thinking, Tom turned and smirked.

"I like surprises," he said. "I like bringing surprises. I like to see the fear cross people's faces when they realize the surprise is all to my liking."

"You're one messed up wizard, Tom."

The door opened. Draco recognized Petunia Dursley and she immediately recognized him.

"What do you want? My nephew isn't here," she stated while eyeing the two handsomely dressed wizards warily.

"You can't even say his name, can you? You still think he's a freak!"

"Draco, you must remain calm. May we come in, Mrs. Dursley?"

As she didn't think she had a choice, Petunia allowed the two into her home and watched Draco carefully as he had been very violent last time. Draco and Tom didn't even bother to sit down. They stared at the furniture with disdain.
"Is your husband and son here?" Tom asked. Petunia shook her head and backed herself into a corner. Tom looked to Draco. Did she think that would protect her? "Well then, you will not mind if we wait," he said. "How long do you expect them to be?"

Petunia remained silent. She realized it was a mistake to let these men into her home. And she was an idiot to have done it while she was the only one there. She felt there was something very very wrong with both of them. "What do you want? Give me a message and I'll relay it to my husband."

"Oh no, we'll wait," Draco said. "I'm sure the message will be better received if it's in person."

"If this is about my nephew…"

"Say his name!" Draco yelled, startling the woman into screaming and covering her face. "His name is Harry! You should at least use his name after everything else you've put him through!"

"I've already told you I was sorry…what more can I do?" she whispered in a terrified high-pitched voice.

"You will control yourself or I will send you home," Tom hissed to Draco. "And you, madam, will convince your husband to return home now. And your little boy as well."

Draco snorted. "Little?"

"Vernon will not come. He doesn't listen to me. And I don't know where Dudley has gone."

Tom approached the woman and sneered in her face. "You will tell him to come home. If he refuses, tell him I will be more than happy to burn his home to the ground…with you trapped inside. Do it now!"

Petunia had no idea who this man was, but the look in his eyes made all the blood drain from her face and she scurried away into the kitchen to pick up the phone. She didn't even think of trying to escape the house. Not that it would have done her any good if she had tried. The black haired young man followed some paces behind, quietly chastising the blond who had started to fume silently.

"Draco, your reactions are getting to be as bad as Harry's. He's always letting his temper get the best of his mouth. Drives me insane."

"Sorry," he muttered and watched the muggle with an eagle eye as she dialed a number.

"You wouldn't by any chance be ringing the authorities, would you?" Tom asked quietly and pushed the disconnect button. She looked at him in surprise, her eyes flashing her guilt. "That would be a stupid move on your part. Try again. And this time, don't make any mistakes. I'm losing patience."

Petunia nodded and with shaking fingers, she dialed the correct number. Vernon came on the line almost immediately. Tom really was losing patience and he put her under the Imperius curse to say exactly what he wanted. She told Vernon their son had been in a very bad accident and he was needed home immediately. That was really all it took, but Tom threw in some hysterical crying in there as well, though Mrs. Dursley didn't need to be under the curse to achieve that.

"Now then, we'll wait for your husband to return, and if your son isn't home by then, we'll just have to go find him." Tom flashed Petunia a humorless grin.

"Who are you? Why are you doing this?"

"My name is Tom Riddle. Perhaps you've heard of me…"
"No. No, I've never heard of you."

"Perhaps you've heard of Lord Voldemort then?" when Petunia's eyes went wide, he chuckled. "So you have heard of me. That's wonderful." He shoved her into a chair at the kitchen table, "Incarcerous." Large thick ropes flashed out of the chair and bound her tightly to it.

"But you can't be here! That old wizard said we had protection."

"You did. Until Harry left and had his seventeenth birthday. Now I may come and go as I please. But believe me, this will be the last you ever see of me." Tom turned to Draco. "Show me this cupboard, Draco."

The blond nodded and went to the cupboard under the stairs and blasted the door open, but not before they both noticed the many locks on the outside. Inside was a small cot, a couple of shelves that took up much of the space inside, and a hanging light socket that held no light bulb. There were stains on the floor and on the small thin mattress. Tom bent and went in to study the stains. When he came out, his eyes were blazing. "Harry's blood…they kept him locked in here? For years?"

Draco nodded, unable to say anything. He was staring at the blood, his eyes glowing an eerie silver and his claws began to extend.

"Not yet," Tom said and placed an understanding hand on the Ukatae's arm. They returned to the kitchen. "You should have destroyed the evidence," he told the squirming woman.

"I thought you wanted to destroy him."

"Let's just say Harry and I have come to an understanding." And in fact, Tom actually thought of Harry as a younger sibling now; which was odd in and of itself, as he'd never had any siblings, but he felt a very strange and warming connection with the younger wizard. "Draco and myself, we are his family now. We have come for payment for the crimes you've committed against him. He was a far better human than you or your family ever was. He doesn't know we're here. He would probably be angry if he knew why we've come."

"Was a better human?" Petunia shivered at the stare Draco was giving her. "Is he…Is Harry dead?" she asked with wide eyes.

Draco sneered. If he didn't know any better he would have thought she sounded worried about Harry. But of course that was impossible. "No, of course not. But he's no longer human. He is what I am." Draco leaned forward and dropped the glamour protecting his ears and teeth. "We are better than human."

Petunia whimpered. "Please. Please let me go. Why are you doing this?"

"We've already explained to you. We are here to seek revenge."

"But you just said he wouldn't want that!"

"Unfortunately for you, we aren't as good natured as Harry." Tom and Draco wore identical smirks and Petunia began to silently cry.

Ginny and Hermione brought Pansy to the Burrow where Molly wasted no time in calming the distraught witch with kindness and a good amount of food and was suitably outraged along with the Slytherin witch.
"You should have seen the old geezer her parents wanted to marry her off to, Mum!"

Molly patted Pansy's arm. "It's alright dear. You don't think Draco or Harry will allow you to be married off like that. And thank Merlin you didn't sign the contract, otherwise you may not have had a choice."

Once Pansy was feeling better, Ginny took her out back so that they could fly around for a while. Molly made them wait before they could go to Malfoy Manor until she could fine them a suitable escort because their Floo network wasn't connected to the Manor at that point. Molly also invited them back later because she wanted to meet the new Tom, so she invited everyone over for dinner. Ron was there to hear this, but as Molly never specified whom the new young man was, he had no idea his mum was talking about Tom Riddle. All he did know was that Harry and his friends were coming for dinner.

"I refuse to sit for dinner with them!"

"Then you may go upstairs and stay there until they have left, Ronald Weasley! Harry is still a part of this family whether you like it or not and Draco is too. And now that Sirius has married Lucius he will be a frequent visitor as well."

"But He's A Death Eater," Ron said slowly as if it were just news to her.

"Who's a Death Eater?" Charlie Weasley came in and kissed his mum's cheek before placing a bundle of flowers on the table.

"Lucius Malfoy! Mum's gone nutters and invited a whole bunch of Dark wizards to dinner!"

"Ronald Weasley, one more word…. Besides, it's never been proven that Lucius is a Death Eater."

"He has the Dark Mark!"

"He was forced to take it under the Imperius, dear. Everyone knows that."

Ron gaped at his mother. Not believing she was making excuses for Lucius Malfoy of all people.

"Mum…" Charlie pulled her away from Ron and started whispering. "I'm not opposed to dinner, but Dumbledore has easy access to the Burrow and you know Ron, he's liable to tell him what's happening."

"Hermione has assured me the Ukatae will provide plenty of protection, dear." Then she raised her voice so that Ron could hear. "And as for Ronald, he won't say a word. Not when I tell him his family may be in danger of Dumbledore if he finds everyone here."

Ron's eyes widened at the possibility of what could happen. He knew his family would be in great danger, and despite his growing hatred for Harry, he didn't want to involve his family in Dumbledore's fight against the boy who lived. That would cause all sorts of problems. Even if they kind of deserved it, what with the way they kept associating with Harry and the Malfoys.

"Besides," Molly went on, "I haven't had a chance to fill Harry's stomach in so long." Charlie grinned. "Will you be joining us dear?"

Ron huffed, mumbled something about going to see Fred and George and quickly departed.

"Course Mum. Don't have to be back to the dragon colony until next week."
"That's wonderful." Molly hustled to the kitchen. "Oh Charlie, will you please escort the girls back to Malfoy Manor? I don't like them traveling by themselves with Dumbledore out looking for Harry and Draco."

"Yeah, sure. Where are they?" Charlie asked. He didn't hear any noise upstairs, so didn't think they were in the house.

"Ginny took Pansy out for a fly. In the yard out back." Charlie nodded and headed to the back lawn where he found Hermione sitting on the grass reading a thick book. As he stood beside her, he looked down and noticed what book it was.

"The Dark Arts, Hermione?"

He chuckled when Hermione squeaked in surprise and slammed the book shut. She was flushing as she quickly rose, trying to hide the book behind her robes. "No worries. It's not like I'm going to think less of you."

"It's good to see you, Charlie."

He gave her a tight one-armed hug. "You too, Herms. I've been appointed to take you three back to Malfoy Manor."

Hermione nodded and they watched Ginny and Pansy fly around. Ginny clearly had more skill, but that was because she was on the Gryffindor Quidditch team. Pansy was simply flying for the fun of it, and by her laughter, the Slytherin witch was clearly in better spirits.

"That Parkinson?" Charlie asked. He squinted his eyes against the sun and pointing to the zigzagging witch above.

"Hm." He looked down to find Hermione already back into her book, unaware of the world.

"So where's Harry? I hear he was on the mission to get Parkinson back as well. He didn't come back here with you?"

"No. He went home to rest. He was complaining about back problems." She pulled her eyes away from the book and grinned at Charlie. "Apparently, Harry is growing wings."

"Seriously?" Charlie's eyes had grown wide, but his grin stretched from ear to ear. "That's wicked."

"At this point he doesn't think so. He's says it was just an annoying itch before, but now the pains are getting more frequent as the wings are forcing their way out of his back. I hope he tells Draco, but I seriously doubt he will."

"Why wouldn't he?"

"Harry still has the bad habit of trying to keep things to himself if he can. He doesn't want to bother anyone. Stupid really."

"I'm sure you'll tell Draco if Harry doesn't."

"You bet your cute butt I will."

"Hermione!" Charlie stared down at her with wide eyes, and the blush on his face was adorable. Charlie cleared his throat and looked away from her grin.

"Well you do have a cute butt. I'm not going to lie."
Charlie ignored her due to his embarrassment and whistled loud and clear for the witches above to hear. Both girls immediately zoomed down and landed lightly beside Hermione and Charlie.

"Pansy, why aren't you on the Quidditch team?" Ginny asked.

The Slytherin witch shrugged and hoisted the broom over her shoulder. "I prefer to do other things to occupy my time." She passed Charlie and gave him a once over with a smirk. Charlie threw his hands up in the air and began backing away.

"I'll take dragons any day." He quickly made his way to the house.

Ginny peered at Hermione in question. "I only said his arse was cute," she answered with an unconcerned shrug. Ginny snorted. Pansy giggled, and they both looked at her.

"It's the truth," the Slytherin replied as she stared after the retreating dragon tamer. "His arse is fine."

"C'mon, ladies. Let's get back to Malfoy Manor. I want to check up on Harry."

After that, Charlie Weasley didn't say much of anything to the girls as he Apparated each girl to the wards of Malfoy Manor. He was wary of all three. And he didn't know it, but Pansy could already Apparate but she failed to mention that because she wanted the cute redhead to have to hold on to her while he Apparated. Charlie quickly vacated as soon as he saw them to the front door.

"Geez, you two certainly scared my brother. Never seen him so quiet," Ginny said as they made their way up to Harry and Draco's room. They found Harry on his stomach in the bed. He smiled when they let themselves in. Immediately the girls climbed onto the huge bed and began to coddle him.

"Oh c'mon! It's just some back pains. They'll go away." 

"Yes, but Harry, that looks painful," Pansy said pointing to his bare back. Harry had removed his shirt due to the fact it felt better with the cold air flowing against it. The bumps and ridges Draco had felt before were more pronounced now and also red and swollen. It certainly did look painful.

"Have you told Draco yet?" Hermione asked. Harry shook his head.

"Why not?" Ginny demanded. "He can help with the pain."

"He's busy with Tom."

"What do you mean, busy? Where are they?"

"They went to the Dursleys, Mione. He thinks I don't know, but I'm not stupid. I haven't contacted him because I don't want to know what they're doing there."

"But Harry," Hermione started quietly, "you do know Tom and Draco want revenge for what the Dursleys did to you."

"Course I know."

"You don't care?"

"No, Gin. Not really." Harry pushed himself and turned around until he was sitting cross-legged, looking at his friends. "And if it makes Draco happy, I'm not going to stop him."

"If I were you, I'd want personal revenge for whatever they did to you," Pansy put in.
"You don't even know what they put him through," Ginny said to her.

"That's because no one has told me anything. But I can guess it was pretty bad. So why don't you want your own revenge?"

"Because I don't care. They are nothing to me anymore. Nothing. I don't want to think about them, see them, hear about them, nothing. But Draco and Tom can have their fun with them because the Dursleys need to be taught that they can't treat people like trash just because they are different."

"Ok, Harry." Hermione gave him a hug, being careful of his back. She could tell he was getting upset over their conversation. "But I still think you should tell Draco about your back. Right now."

"I'll do it now then," he replied, only because he knew she wouldn't stop nagging him otherwise. Harry twisted back around to lie on his stomach again. Someone ran their fingers through his hair in a comforting gesture, and when he turned to smile at them he was surprised to find it was Pansy.

"Thanks for coming to save me, Harry," she said, smiling softly.

"You're my friend now, Pansy. Course I'd save you!"

"Of course he would. He has that hero complex, you know," Ginny laughed.

"I do NOT have a hero complex!"

"You do, Harry," both Ginny and Hermione announced. Harry huffed and buried his face against his arms while Pansy snorted and ruffled his hair.

They had been waiting for twenty minutes already for that fat bastard to return home and Draco was seriously getting impatient. As crazy as it sounded, he was missing Harry and it was on a far too intense level. Draco wondered if that would ever lessen and he hoped it wouldn't. It was both a pleasant and uncomfortable feeling. He could have talked to Harry, but Draco didn't want to contact him just in case his mate decided to question him on his whereabouts. Draco didn't think he could lie very well to Harry at this point, and he didn't really want to lie at all.

Draco? Speak of the devil. I'm being pestered to contact you.

Why?

My back is hurting. It's kind of painful. I wasn't going to say anything, but Mione is relentless...

Draco pushed away from the wall of the kitchen where he'd stopped his pacing to glare at the floor and moved into the living room where he could have more privacy, even though he was only talking in his head. Tom nodded at him as he passed, guessing at why Draco was leaving.

I'm glad she made you tell me. I'll come home now.

I know where you are. Draco's eyes widened. How could Harry know? He heard Harry chuckling in his mind and frowned. Just finish what you're doing then come home. I'm not mad at you. Though I am a little annoyed that you didn't tell me where you were going.

I thought you would try to stop me. And then I would have had to go against your wishes if you'd told me not to go.

Just don't get caught, and don't tell me what you've done either. I never want to know. Oh! And don't be out too late because I've just been informed we are having dinner with the Weasleys tonight. Tom
Draco could hear the amusement in Harry's voice.

Okay. I'll let Tom know. Not sure if he'll accept the invitation though.

Oh, he will. Just tell him Mrs. Weasley will be very angry if he refuses. She might even come after him with her wooden spoon! Draco couldn't help but laugh out loud at the mental picture that brought to his mind.

"WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING IN MY HOUSE?"

Vernon Dursley's bulging form suddenly filled Draco's vision to where he could see every disgusting pore of the muggle.

Need to go Harry. Draco flicked his fingers out and sent the muggle flying back into the opposite wall, and watched happily as Vernon Dursley slid down the wall. Draco pulled his wand and pointed it at the man's face. "Get up."

Vernon heaved himself to his feet, his face gone purple with rage. He had a wild look in his eyes that made Draco think the muggle might actually try and take his wand away from him. To deter the fat muggle, Draco flashed his fangs and that took all the fight out of the muggle.

"Where's my son? What have you done to him?"

"All in good time. To the kitchen."

"Petunia!" he spat upon seeing his wife tied up at the table. Tom watched as the wife flinched upon seeing her husband enter. "You let these freaks into my home!" Vernon stormed over to his wife and slapped her face; not once, but repeatedly. Mrs. Dursley remained silent and let him hit her.

"That's enough!" Draco yelled. He couldn't help but see a resemblance in Mrs. Dursley to Harry when Mr. Dursley was hitting her. Like she had resigned herself to that fate. Draco pushed Vernon into a chair and bound him to it as well. Then he turned to the woman.

"Why did you return to him? You said you wanted to correct your son's attitude. And yet here you are." Draco leaned forward and pulled at the end of the pink scarf from around her neck until it fell off, exposing the dark brutal fat fingerprints imprinted against her pale skin. Draco flinched when he saw it. "And it seems now that Harry is gone your husband has turned his fists on you."

"We had nowhere else to go," she replied quietly. "And he wouldn't let me take our son away from him."

"That's right. He's my son." Vernon sneered.

"I couldn't leave Dudley here with only his father. He would only get worse. I don't want my son to grow up any more like him," Petunia defended herself.

Draco peered at Mrs. Dursley and wondered if they were doing the right thing; at least to her and her child. He firmly believed Mr. Dursley deserved what was about to happen to him, but he wasn't sure about the woman and her child now. And he couldn't follow through with this in good conscious if he wasn't absolutely sure. He tried to convey his thoughts to Tom by look alone, but he wasn't sure if the Dark Lord understood what was in his look. Tom was standing back against the counter watching everything with a detached look. Draco crossed to him.

"Is she really sorry? Can you see?" he asked quietly.
Tom gave him an odd look, his brow lifting past his hairline. He didn't really care if she was sorry or not, but he understood what was going through Draco's mind. He crossed to the table and sat down across from Mrs. Dursley and peered into her eyes. "She is. I see her son has improved upon his thoughts as well, despite this bastard," he said, nodding to Vernon. "They are both afraid of him."

"As they should be," Vernon spat. Draco walked forward, extended his claws and hit the muggle across the face, enjoying the way his claws ripped the man's flesh. Mr. Dursley screamed as the blood began to ooze down his face.

Suddenly, the front door banged open and they heard Dudley Dursley stomping through the house. "Mum! Mum, are you alright?" he skidded to a halt upon entering the kitchen.

"Now why would you think something has happened to your mother?" Draco asked and waved the teen into the kitchen. Dudley automatically did as Draco directed and headed straight for his mother.

"I…Er…I was at the park and saw father speeding by…I thought…"

"You don't like to leave your mother alone with your father then?" Tom asked curiously. Dudley shook his head.

"Please…please don't hurt my son. Please," Petunia begged.

"Mum?" Dudley turned wide eyes on everyone in the room, and then he stopped at Draco, recognition suddenly taking over. "You're that boy who helped Harry before. You look…different."

"I am different."

"Is Harry all right?"

Draco hid his surprise well, and smiled coldly at the boy. "Do you really care?"

Dudley looked to his father, and then quickly looked away. Vernon was giving him the coldest look he'd ever seen.

"Answer," Tom ordered. "You will not be harmed for answering truthfully."

Draco held back a snort. Tom was lying through his teeth! The Dursley boy's answer would probably determine whether he lived through this or not.

"Er…yeah, I guess I do," the boy answered without looking at either Draco or Tom. Draco could feel the fear coming off him in waves, but was surprised that it wasn't just fear he felt; there was also a large amount of curiosity as well. That was interesting.

"Draco, take Mrs. Dursley and her son upstairs and lock them in a room. But make sure they can hear everything that goes on down here. That should be punishment enough," Tom ordered, taking the decision from Draco's conflicted hands. He stood and Draco nodded before releasing Petunia from the chair.

"If you and your son want to survive, I suggest you keep quiet." Draco pushed them out of the kitchen and up the stairs, shoving them into Harry's old bedroom. He placed a charm around the room so that any noise coming from downstairs was magnified into the room.

"What are you going to do to Vernon?" she asked.

"Do you care?"
"I... I don't know. He is my husband after all."

"Dad's insane," Dudley whispered, standing in front of his mother. "He still wishes he'd killed Harry."

"Do you still think Harry is a freak?"

"No, he's just different. Are you sure he's okay?"

Draco nodded and smirked. "I should know. He's my lover, after all." And with that he shut the door on their shocked faces and snickered all the way down the stairs.

When Draco reentered the kitchen, he found Tom and Mr. Dursley in a staring contest, but the only reason why the muggle wasn't looking away was because he was frozen in fear. Tom had told him exactly who he was.

"I want you to know," Draco began to Mr. Dursley, "that by the time we are finished with you, there won't be a breath left in your body. You will be dead by tonight."

Tom rolled his eyes and sighed heavily. "Merlin, Draco. Thanks so very much for spoiling the surprise!"

"Oh, sorry." Draco shrugged and placed his wand on the kitchen counter.

"Fine then. I'll let you have your fun first," Tom said.

Draco went forward and placed his hands on the table and leaned towards Dursley. "Have you ever seen a tiger eat live prey?" Mr. Dursley's face twitched under the pain Draco's claws had caused on his face, but otherwise remained silent and unmoving. "I tell you it's not a pretty sight. Maybe I'll give you a firsthand look, yeah?" Draco stepped back and to Vernon Dursley's horror, the blond man shimmered and fell to his hands and knees.

Draco's entire body trembled and then Dursley's eyes went wide with fear when he saw a massive white tiger sitting where the blond used to be. The tiger's face tilted up, he stretched his massive jaws, showing off extremely sharp teeth, and let out a deafening roar. Tom stood still, looking at the tiger with an extremely pleased expression on his face.

"Very nice, Draco. No stripes, either. That's very strange."

Vernon watched as the tiger swiveled his head to the other man and nodded. Then he turned back and pinned Vernon with a wicked stare, licking his chops. Vernon thought it perfectly natural that he should be so fearful that he lost control over his bowels.

"T-this only proves that I'm right!" he shouted, ashamed his voice trembled as badly as his big form was. "You're all freaks intent on driving the world mad! Your actions today only reinforce what I've thought all along."

"Do you think we would be here if you had raised Harry properly or if you had treated him like family instead of a piece of trash?" Tom moved forward to stroke the tiger's head. "Most of the time all we want is to be left alone. To keep you and your kind from destroying us. To keep you from alienating our children. We have to hide our communities in fear of being persecuted by people like you. You consider yourself the epitome of normal, yet you aren't. You abuse children and ostracize anyone different from you. Your kind included. Do you think anyone will care if you are no longer around?"
By the end of Tom's tirade, in which Vernon was more or less ignoring because he knew he was right and nothing the freak said would make a difference to him, the blond freak had transformed back into a man and was looking at the other freak with an annoyed look on his face.

"Do you mind? May I go back to stalking my prey now?" he asked acidly. "You said it was my turn, Tom."

"Excuse me, Draco," the dark haired one said, and bowed to the blond. "Please proceed."

Draco turned back to Dursley and could see the muggle had heard nothing Tom was trying to say. "I have a better idea. Instead of eating you, because that would just be really gross, I'm going to make you feel all that Harry ever felt while he lived under this roof. And I promise not one bit of it will be good. You will feel all of the mental torture and physical abuse you ever put him through. You will feel as if you are Harry during all of it."

Draco clapped his hands and closed his eyes before inhaling. As he did so, the air seemed to swirl around him, breezes coming from the walls and rooms themselves instead of from outside. Tom felt the house was breathing with Draco and when the Ukatae exhaled, all the air seemed to slam into Vernon Dursley, knocking him and the chair onto its back. Dursley started coughing uncontrollably, gasping for oxygen even as the air around seemed to want to strangle him. And then the muggle started to shake and spasm.

"Feel that? You're feeling the horror he felt every time he had to come back here. The terror he felt every time he heard you and thought you were going to punish him for something your son did."

Draco snapped his fingers and Dursley started to scream when they heard several of his bones snapping out of place. "Oh yes. And every time you broke a bone…” Draco made himself not flinch when the muggle's bones continued to break. There were so many breaks in so many places. Draco hadn't known Harry had been subjected to that much. It was clear Harry was still keeping things to himself. Draco wondered how Harry had been able to keep the abuse secret for so long. Surely someone must have seen or noticed something.

Draco scowled and added on the emotional pain and watched as Vernon began to cry and scream and yell that he was not insignificant and that he mattered.

"So much pain you put him through." Draco's eyes brightened in fury as the muggle began to beg him to stop the torture. "Did you stop?" he spat. "Did you even think about the damage you were doing?"

At one point, Dursley's collarbone broke and tore through the flesh; Draco heard a rib break, and Dursley started to cough up blood. Draco remembered the last time Harry had coughed up blood and looked at Tom. "When did that happen to Harry? Was it more than once?"

Tom searched Vernon's mind and winced. He really didn't want to answer that question. He knew it would be a really bad mistake. "Are you going to leave him like that?" he asked instead. "The muggle is going to drown in his blood."

"I don't give a shit! Answer me."

"The first time, Harry was nine. The second time, it was just after he'd received his Hogwarts letter, at the age of ten. The third time happened this summer."

"He was nine the first time…” Draco felt such sadness and pain that he had to squeeze his eyes closed to keep the tears at bay. His Harry. So small. So much pain…
"Finish him. Do what you want with the two upstairs," Draco said to Tom. "I have to get back to Harry."

Draco Apparated in the next instant. Tom stared at Dursley as the muggle continued to go through the pain. Whatever magic Draco had used to allow Dursley to feel everything Harry had was still working, even without the blond there. Tom had no problem sitting down and watching the torture go on. He could have done it all night. But Tom wouldn't need to wait all night as everything was happening all at once, which was why it was such a great payback. He knew Dursley would lose his mind before the end of it.

Eventually Tom stood up and kicked Vernon onto his side so that the fat man wouldn't actually drown in blood. "I don't know if you can understand what's going on now, or if you can hear me, but I really hope you can. There is a spell that I learned where it makes a person's organs, all of them, come out of the body to land in a mess at that person's feet." Tom smiled serenely. "Would you like to see how that works, Mr. Dursley?"

Draco Apparated directly to his room and was surprised to find Harry in bed with three witches. "If I didn't know Harry so well, and the fact that he's obviously gay, you would all die in a very painful way," he commented, trying and failing to smile at his own joke as he walked over to the bed. He saw Harry had discarded his shirt and had white cloths placed over his back.

Harry propped himself up by his elbows and shot his mate a grin. "They're only keeping me company," he replied softly, locking his eyes with Draco's and immediately seeing what the blond was trying to hide. The pain, sadness, guilt, and turmoil.

"Glad you're back, though," Hermione offered. She sat cross-legged beside Harry with a bowl of water in her lap and was wringing some of the water out from a white washcloth. She removed a cloth from Harry's back and Draco sucked in a breath when he saw the red swollen bumps along the pale skin. Hermione quickly covered the spot with the new washcloth. Harry sighed in relief and dropped his head to the pillow.

"Amortia was in here earlier. But she couldn't do much for the pain," she explained.

"I guess I'm just going to have to deal with it until my wings come in."

Draco nodded and climbed onto the bed, smiling at Ginny when she made room for him. He was about to place his hands over the cloth on Harry's back when his mate stopped him.

"No sense in both of us feeling the pain. Eventually it'll go away. I can handle it. S'not like I'm going to die from this."

"Don't be stupid, Harry."

Draco continued on to what he was doing and hissed when he felt the throbbing pain, but eventually the pain ebbed and Harry was feeling a little better, but not much.

"Doesn't seem to be working like it usually does," Draco said, frowning.

"Probably because this has to happen."

"Did Amortia give you any pain potions?"

"No. She wanted to wait to see if you could heal it without me having to take something extra. I told her nothing was going to be able to help."
"I wonder what the wings will look like and what color they'll be," Ginny said.

"Pink. I hope they turn out to be pink."

Everyone turned to stare at Pansy incredulously; all except Harry, whose face was suddenly tinged green. "Pink?" he squeaked.

"What? I think pink would be a nice color."

"Pansy! If you've jinxed me into having pink wings, I'll kill you and then I'll kill myself! I mean, really. I already look like a bloody girl."

"And what's wrong with being a girl, Harry?"

"Nothing Gin, if you are one!" he spat vehemently. "But I'm a boy, not a girl!"

Draco looked at the girls and as one they nodded. "We'll be back to check on you later," Hermione said, and she dropped a kiss on Harry's head.

When they were all gone, Harry sighed. "I hate being treated like a baby," he mumbled. "It's only stupid wings. They'll probably be ugly and bothersome..."

Draco half smiled. Cranky Harry was adorable. "It's hurting you. Nobody likes to see you hurt."

"You shouldn't have gone there," Harry said after hearing the darkness creep into Draco's voice and knowing exactly where it had come from. "It hasn't made you feel any better has it?"

"No."

"You won't go there again?"

"No."

"Promise me."

"I promise never to go there again."

"Good." Then Harry brightened. "Did you tell Tom about dinner tonight?"

Draco finally truly smiled. "No. It's a surprise. The wizard keeps going on and on about surprises. So I figured we would give him one."

Harry shook his head and laughed. He was pretty sure tonight was going to turn into an event of chaos.
Returning to Malfoy Manor in high spirits, Tom headed straight to his rooms to freshen up before he sought out Harry. He had planned to give Harry a present on his birthday but hadn't been able to get around to it. Ah well, Harry would have to deal with it being late, but Tom was sure Harry would love the gift so much that he wouldn't care that it was a belated gift.

As he showered, Tom reflected on his actions of the day, and he wondered at himself. Vernon Dursley was well and truly dead, and he had died painfully. Tom was still just evil enough to have been turned on by all the pain and blood he'd seen coming from the muggle. But the strange thing was, before he left, he'd gone upstairs and obliviated Mrs. Dursley and her son and left false memories for them. All they knew was that Dursley had come home, packed up his bags, and then left them for somewhere unknown with no intention of ever returning to his family. Tom didn't know why he felt the need to see that they could move on from the tyranny Vernon Dursley had put them through. It boggled his mind really. He'd even gone so far as to demand the fat muggle boy clean himself up and start acting like a man and to make sure he took care of his mother.

"Having this conscious is simply loathsome," he grumbled.

Once he was showered and dressed, Tom found Nagini and they both traveled to search out Harry. He knocked on Harry and Draco's door, and heard both their voices call out for him to enter. Tom was actually surprised he wasn't made to wait out in the hall for a few minutes, because if Harry and Draco were in there alone it was usually a given that the two *Ukatae* were involved in vigorous physical activities with each other. As soon as he entered, it became clear why the two had let him in so quickly. Harry was on his stomach in the bed, the white washcloths Hermione had placed still on his back. Draco was sitting next to him with a book in his lap and a hand running through Harry's hair. He'd stopped reading as soon as Tom had knocked.

"What happened here?" Tom asked, his long legs bringing him across the room to stop at the foot of the bed where he placed the silver wrapped box upon the bed. Nagini hissed and to Draco's horror she slithered onto the bed and made herself very comfortable against Harry's side.

"Bloody wings," Harry murmured, but then he smiled and hissed a greeting to Nagini.

"At least the pain potion Amortia brought worked," Draco said.

"Only a little. The potion's effects are already fading. I hate feeling like this!"

"He's in a bit of a foul mood," Draco explained unnecessarily to Tom.

Tom nodded and picked up the box. "I have something for you, Harry. A belated birthday present. I hope you will be pleased with the gift."

"A present? Really?" Harry bolted up into a sitting position and stretched his arms out for the box which Tom readily handed over. "Thanks, Tom!" Harry set the box in front of him and began to slowly unwrap it. Halfway through, his fingers stilled over the wrapping and he looked up at the
Dark Lord. "It's alive."

Tom frowned. "It was supposed to be a surprise." Nagini twisted around to encircle the box, flicking it with her tongue. "Hurry up and open it, Potter!"

Harry grinned and ripped the rest of the silver wrapping off and then quickly lifted the lid. He gasped in surprised pleasure when he saw what was inside. Coiled in a tight circle was a very young black snake which appeared to be asleep since it wasn't moving at all. He couldn't see its head since it was tucked under part of the coiled body. Harry stared with wide eyes into the box, a large smile plastered on his face.

Draco crawled over, careful to keep from touching Nagini and peered into the box. "It's a baby and very beautiful," he admitted grudgingly. It was the truth. The black scales were unblemished, and looked soft like pure silk. The baby snake could have passed for an onyx necklace.

"I've been breeding them from Nagini for years, and this batch was special. Unfortunately only one youngling survived. This one."

"And you decided to give her to me?" Harry's pleasure was evident and his bright green eyes told both Draco and Tom how much the gift meant to him. Tom ducked his head. He didn't want the other two to see how Harry's pleasure affected him. But he couldn't deny to himself how pleased he was that Harry was truly happy and thankful for his gift. It gave him a new uncomfortable warm feeling originating in his chest.

Harry put his hand into the box and reverently stroked the small snake with a finger. Nagini slipped her head over the edge and flicked her baby with her tongue. *Wake up, baby. Meet your new master.* The baby moved slightly, but otherwise did not respond. Draco snorted.

"Just like you, Harry. Doesn't want to wake up when it's time."

"At least I'm good enough to let her sleep until she wants to." Harry reached in and scooped the small creature into the palm of his hand, then brought it up the cradle against his chest before looking back to Tom. "I really do love her. Thanks very much."

Tom could only nod.

"How do you know it's a she?" Draco asked.

Harry looked at Draco and shrugged. "I'm getting definite feminine vibes when I touch her." Then he looked to Tom. "What did you mean by special batch? I'm getting other vibes as well."

Tom nodded and sat at the edge of the bed. "She is very intelligent for one. More so than usual for familiars. Also, right now she's only the size of a small length of rope so that she could fit in the box. When she reverts to her normal size, I believe she'll be as long as your forearm. She will continue to grow as she matures, but she will not be any larger the Nagini."

"That's a relief. No offense, but your snake is way too big," Draco sniffed.

"She is very large, but I see nothing wrong with that," Harry replied, his new familiar still against his warm chest.

"She is highly venomous, being a viper and above all she can become invisible at will."

"What?" Draco had gone pale. For someone who belonged in Slytherin house and the way Draco responded when Harry spoke Parseltongue, the blond seemed to have a slight fear of snakes. Harry
found this incredibly funny. He laughed as he continued to stroke his new snake until there was more movement and the snake sent out vibes of her annoyance of being woken up.

"She's mad I'm waking her up." Hello, little one. Can you hear me? The snake shifted again and slowly raised her head. Harry couldn't help but gasp when her eyes became visible and revealed shocking green orbs that matched his perfectly.

"I assure you, her coloring was not done like that on purpose. It's simply a coincidence."

"That's a bloody big coincidence."

"I said it was unintentional, Draco!"

Too much noisesss. Harry's snake plopped her head down on the back of Harry's hand.

We'll keep it down, lovely. The snake stared at him with bright eyes.

You are my new master? The Harry Potter? She touched his skin with her pink forked tongue.

Yes. I hope you approve. And it's Harry.

Beside him, Draco groaned and threw himself backwards and wrapped a pillow around his head to cover his ears.

Of course. I have been promised to you since I hatched.

Really? Harry looked at Tom with a raised eyebrow. How long ago was this snake hatched? he wondered. And had Tom planned to give the snake to him with some nefarious plan involved before they became friends?

As if sensing his thoughts, Tom smirked. Harry half glared at him. "Never would have worked, you know."

"Yes, it would have. Like I said, she's very intelligent. But it's a moot point now, isn't it?"

"Thanks again. I really do love her."

"I'm glad, then. I'll leave you alone now."

"Wait a minute. We're leaving soon and you'll be joining us. Would you like to come with us, lovely?"

Oh yes. I haven't been outside these walls before. The snake slithered up his arm and wrapped around his neck. She fit perfectly.

All right. Just don't go biting anyone unless I say.

Of course, Master.

Harry nodded and tugged the pillow off of Draco's head. He placed hands on either side of Draco and leaned over until their noses were nearly touching. Harry turned his head to look at his lovely snake, whose head rested on his shoulder. This is my mate. No matter what he does to me, you are not to bite him. Understood?

Yessss.
Harry looked back at Draco and smirked. Good. Draco nearly went cross-eyed with lust and hissed at Harry to let him know he did not appreciate the teasing, especially since he knew they were about to leave and wouldn't be able to follow through on the teasing.

"Where are we going?" Tom asked as Harry and Draco climbed from the bed to join him at the door.

"It's a surprise. And don't bother looking into our minds, Tom. It won't work."

"You've brought me to the dragon lady's house!" Tom hissed right outside the front door of the Burrow, and glared when both Harry and Draco began to snicker. It took them a moment to realize they weren't the only ones to have found that funny, and turned around to find the twins laughing as well.

Were they told who Tom is? They don't look like they know, Draco wondered.

I think whoever knows already is keeping it to themselves.

"Dragon lady. That's a good one, mate." One of the twins came up and stuck out his hand. "I'm George."

"Luther," Tom said after a moment.

"It's a pleasure, Luther. A real pleasure," said the redhead with a leering smile as he gazed at Tom from head to foot and back again before turning to his brother. "And this is my brother, Fred."

Tom turned to Draco. "Did he just…?"

"Yes. Yes he did," Draco replied with a snicker.

"Stop lying. You're Fred and he's George," Harry pointed out. The twins frowned.

"Harry, don't spoil all our fun."

Or their deaths. Draco's soft voice echoed in Harry's head. Harry shot Draco a glare.

Remember, Draco. I don't want to hear anything negative coming out of your mouth about the Burrow. No thoughts either or I swear I'll make you regret it!

I said I understand. You've only told me about a hundred times.

Just want to make sure you understand.

I'm not about to insult the Weasleys, unless it's Ronald Weasley. All the other Weasleys have grown on me…

Harry smiled and kissed Draco. Thanks. Draco smiled against his mouth, nodded, and then gripped Harry's hips to keep his mate against him. Harry's smile widened and he lifted an arm to drape it around Draco's neck, sliding his fingers into his mate's hair and kissed him again.

"This way, Luther. We'll give you the grand tour as it seems Harry and Draco are otherwise indisposed."

Fred and George ushered Tom inside, and as he passed the snogging Ukatae, Tom glared at the two for leaving him in the clutches of the Weasley twins, but they didn't notice as they were completely wrapped up in each other…once again.
"Mum! Harry and Draco are here with their new friend! His name's Luther!" Fred yelled, and steered Tom into the warm fragrant kitchen.

Molly Weasley's back was to them as she moved this way and that amidst a dozen or so pots and pans and trays, all filled to bursting with savory food that was making Tom's mouth water. Upon hearing her son's words, Molly spun around with a spoon clutched in her hands. Her smile turned into slack jawed surprise upon seeing Tom.

"Well...my word!" Molly approached and set the spoon down at the table, relieving Tom as he'd been watching it warily, having remembered Harry's complaints about how dangerous she was with it. Molly walked straight up to him and to his surprise she put her palms upon his cheeks and brought his face down to hers so she could study him closely. Her sons gave each other identical looks and wondered why their mother was acting so strange around the new boy. A new boy who was deliciously hot. They sincerely hoped he liked playing with the same sex.

"You've done a wonderful job...Luther was it?" she dropped her hands and beamed at him, though her smile was a little fractured. She didn't know how she was supposed to act. He was still Voldemort after all.

"Yes, Mrs. Weasley." Tom gave her a warm smile, realizing her worries and wishing to push them away.

"Yes, dear. Fabulous job." She patted his shoulder and then turned back to her stove.

"Er...Mum? What are you talking about? How do you know Luther? We just met him."

Molly waved the question away. "Go and get the girls from upstairs. I need help finishing dinner."

"We can help you, Mum," George said.

Fred hit him upside the head. "Idiot! You really want to stay in the kitchen and cook?" he hissed. George quickly shook his head, and he and his twin backed out of the kitchen, leaving Tom alone with the Weasley matriarch.

"You didn't tell them who I am," he stated as he moved to stand beside her. He really wanted to see what food was making his mouth water.

"Was it my place to say? Besides, the less people who know at the moment the better it will be for you, I imagine."

"I don't mind your family knowing, Mrs. Weasley. Most of them know already, and they have been a great help since I've made the alliance with Harry and Draco." Mrs. Weasley smiled to herself and continued to stir. "I will be going to Hogwarts this coming term."

Molly stopped her stirring and turned to face him. "Do you think that's wise?"

"Harry and Draco insisted, and if I go, they have one more person to look out for their safety," Tom said with a shrug. Surprisingly, Molly's eyes softened and her smile brightened.

"They mean something to you now, don't they? You care about them."

Tom frowned but nodded. "Apparently I do. They gave me a bloody conscience with this body."

Molly chuckled. He seemed seriously bothered by that. "And you are now completely young, is that correct?"
"Yes. I am eighteen. The only thing that is different from normal wizards my age is the fact that I have kept all my memories and abilities from...I guess I'll say past life from now on."

Molly nodded and turned back to her cooking. "You go on into the sitting room and try to socialize. You need to do that more now. Dinner will be some time from now. You three came early."

Tom immediately did as she asked, looking around as he did so. There was a thundering noise as people came running down the stairs, and Tom placed a firm hand on the nearest surface as if that would keep the walls from falling down. This home had to be the worst structured house he'd ever been in and that was saying something. However, it was clearly lived in and loved, and that seemed to make all the difference. Tom couldn't help but like it, despite the cramped quarters. He watched as Hermione, Ginny, Pansy and the twins rushed into the room. The girls passed him with a wave and a smile before going into the kitchen, while the twins came to him and pulled him over to the couch. He only allowed it because Molly had asked him to be sociable. One of the twins sat beside him and the other sat in a sagging chair across and picked up a Quidditch magazine.

"Which one are you?" he asked the one next to him. He'd already used Legilimency on him and knew, but Tom wanted to see if he'd tell the truth.

"Fred."

"Hmm. You told the truth."

"Of course, mate. Why wouldn't I?"

"I was told you never tell the truth."

Fred pouted dramatically. "And who told you such obvious lies?" he picked up a bowl of candies that was sitting on the old rickety coffee table and started to rummage through the bowl until he apparently found one he liked and popped it into his mouth. In a move of courtesy Fred handed the bowl to Tom, who stared at the brightly colored candies.

"Mum makes the best candies, doesn't she George?"

George had his head buried behind a Quidditch magazine, but he gave an affirmative nod. "Try the yellow ones, Luther. Those are my favorite ones."

"The yellows don't look like candy."

"They are custard candies. Cream filled. Go on. They taste great!"

Tom didn't think there was anything strange about the way Fred and George were acting and because he was fond of sweets, he found a yellow one and picked it up. He missed the gleeful look in Fred's eyes as well as George's discreet look from over the magazine and brought the candy to his mouth.

Harry and Draco walked into the house then after having spent several glorious minutes snogging in front of the Weasleys front door. Harry saw what was happening and he went into panic overload. He stretched his hand out to accio the candy, but instead of catching the one Tom had, he instead caught the candy bowl and had it zooming towards him. It would have smacked him in the face had Draco not caught it. After recovering from that close call, Harry saw he was too late. Tom had plopped the whole thing in his mouth and was already chewing. Harry ran over and started yelling, "spit it out, Tom! Spit it out!" Of course, that did no good either. Seconds later a giant canary replaced the form of Tom. The twins burst out laughing, and when Harry looked over at his mate, he found Draco hunched over laughing as well.
"Shut it, you three!"

"What's the problem, Harry? It's just a joke."

The giant canary's eyes were pinned on the twins with a deadly glare, though he made no move towards them.

"You're going to want to run away now," Harry said seriously.

"Have we missed something?" George wondered.

"Yes." Draco came over and wiped the tears of mirth away. "You've just hexed the Dark Lord into a canary! Merlin, Tom. That's a very good look on you."

"The…Dark Lord?" both twin's faces lost all color as they stared horrified at the molting figure before them.

"Luther is really Tom Riddle," Harry replied quietly, secretly amused by the whole situation. He had warned Tom after all.

"We're going to die now, aren't we?" Fred asked seriously. The bird croaked something and they took that as a yes. The twins began to back away and when they saw Tom change back and grab his wand, they took off running to the kitchen and out of the back door.

"Now, Tom… calm down before you decide to do anything rash," Draco said between snickers.

"How would you like it if I curse you into oblivion, Draco?"

"I wouldn't like that at all," he replied with a straight face.

"I did warn you. I told you to watch out for the twins. There is a reason why their shop is one of the most popular in Diagon Alley," Harry said.

"What's this about the Dark Lord and a yellow bird?" Pansy asked as she came back from the kitchen where she had been no help whatsoever. It wasn't her fault she'd never cooked one thing in her entire life.

"Tom ate one of the Canary Creams the twins produce."

"Ah." Pansy wisely refrained from grinning as Tom sent her a glare. She crossed over to give Harry a kiss on the cheek. And then she noticed Harry's snake wrapped around his neck. "What a gorgeous necklace, Harry!" She went to touch the snake's head that was lying on the end of its tail at the junction between Harry's neck and shoulder. The snake sensed the impending touch and lifted her head slightly. Pansy stepped back in surprise, but she looked more intrigued than scared. "Is it an enchanted necklace?"

Harry looked at his snake curiously. You do look like a necklace the way you're wrapped around my neck, he realized.

Do you wish me to move, Master?

No. I like where you are. "She's a real snake," Harry said to Pansy. "Tom gave her to me for my birthday. She is lovely, isn't she?"

Pansy nodded and then smirked at the expression on Draco's face. He looked like he was enjoying
hearing Harry speak to the snake but at the same time didn't like the fact that the snake was wrapped around his mate's neck. "How's your back?" she asked. "I see you forwent your robes."

"Pain potion helps a little and it's better to just wear a loose fitting shirt than something tight. The robes would have rubbed against my back too much." Harry had chosen to wear tight fitting jeans and borrowed a dark blue shirt from Draco, and due to their size difference the shirt seemed to engulf his smaller frame like a tent.

"And it provides me easier access. I don't have to work so hard to get my hands up under the shirt."

"Draco. We don't want to hear it."

"Yes, that is far too much information." Tom turned and headed for the kitchen with every intention of going out to find the twins and exacting revenge upon them.

"You two, honestly," he heard Pansy saying as he walked away. "I guess you're always horny for each other because you spent the last six years fighting off your attraction."

"Or maybe it's because Draco is just so damn sexy I can't help myself."

Tom shook his head as he heard Draco's laughter.

"Why do you have your wand out?" Hermione asked Tom when he passed her. He simply gave her an evil grin. "Don't kill them!" she hissed quietly, sincerely worried that was his intention. Everyone had heard what happened from the twins as they sputtered on their way through. Molly looked over and pinned Tom with such a glare that he involuntarily shuddered. It must have been easier for her to do that since he looked like a normal teenager instead of an all-powerful Dark Lord. Maybe he made a mistake when he chose to revert back to eighteen.

"Hermione, I plan to do no such thing. I might not survive Mrs. Weasley's wrath." Convinced, Hermione nodded and returned to chopping up vegetables and Tom followed the twins out of the Burrow.

Spread before him was a large yard surrounded by a fence, hedges, and large gnarled trees. Just as he stepped off the porch, he heard two distinct pops that told him Fred and George had Apparated away. Tom returned his wand back into the folds of his robes and continued on out into the garden. Fred and George would eventually have to return. Tom grinned. He was looking forward to that.

He moved across the yard, unconcerned about any danger, as he, Draco, and Harry had put up strong wards around the Burrow and the surrounding area when they had arrived. It was a relatively large yard and there was a small storage shed off to the side. Beyond that he saw an orchard, which had makeshift Quidditch rings planted in the ground. He could imagine all the Weasley offspring out playing the game, laughing and enjoying their life, and for the first time that he could remember, Tom wondered what it would have been like to be part of a family like this.

He moved around the area and spent a great deal of time thinking of things like that. Things he would never have thought about before. Regret was hitting him like ten Bludgers all at once. He walked blindly, completely immersed in his thoughts, and didn't notice he'd come to the front of the house until voices brought him back to the present. He looked up to find Severus, Sirius, and Lucius standing in the yard. Lucius was standing in between a bickering Severus and Sirius, and he looked like he was about ready to hex his husband and his friend.

"Once again, your ignorance astounds me, Black. How did you ever make it out of the veil?"

"Don't ever speak to me about that again, Snivellus!" Sirius barked.
When Severus mentioned Sirius' time in the veil, Lucius went pale and clutched onto Sirius' arm as if that would prevent the Animagus from ever leaving him again. Tom recalled that event. He remembered Lucius' reaction, and though Lucius had hid his pain very well, it had been blatantly obvious to the Dark Lord and Severus. It had been worse because Lucius had been there, in the Department of Mysteries. Only a few short feet away from his ex lover. And even though he and Sirius hadn't been together for years by then, Lucius had still been inconsolable for a very long time. Perhaps all the way until the point when he'd found out that Sirius had returned. And the only reason why Lucius hadn't killed Bellatrix was because he knew Tom wouldn't have approved.

Tom continued to watch, unnoticed, as Sirius turned to Lucius and upon seeing his face paler than normal, and guessing at his thoughts, he threw his arm around Lucius' shoulders, shot one last glare at Severus, and then led Lucius into the Burrow.

"Stupid mutt!" Severus sneered. Tom approached him and watched him with a blank face. Severus nodded to him and then blinked when Tom merely continued to watch him. "Yes?" he snapped. Tom raised an eyebrow.

"Why don't you two drop the school yard rivalry already? It's getting old and we really have no time for it." Tom turned and walked into the house, smirking when he heard Severus curse behind him.

Upon entering the house, he found Fred and George had returned and were sticking close to Harry and Draco, as if that would give them extra protection. He purposely ignored them to instate a false sense of security. He looked around and noticed two more redheads in attendance. Arthur and Charlie Weasley. Both men looked at him as he entered. Charlie came over and shook Tom's hand, and Tom realized it had been an unnecessary point to tell the Weasleys a fake name as they already knew who he was, except for Ronald Weasley and the twins. Fred and George were aware now, and Ronald Weasley chose to spend the night at a friend's house, so it really wasn't a point anymore.

Arthur Weasley wasn't as welcoming as Charlie and only gave him a slight nod. Tom understood Mr. Weasley's reluctance and wariness of having him in his home and around his family. The wizard was still upset over the fact that Tom had sent Nagini to kill him when he was guarding the room that supposedly held a prophecy about Harry and himself.

Tom sat down on a couch and was surprised when Charlie came to sit next to him. He caught Charlie eyeing the kitchen warily as he sat.

"So, how do you like the new body?" Charlie finally asked.

"It is suitable." Tom stared blankly, hardly blinking, across the room at the twins, who were doing their best trying to look like they didn't notice him when in fact they were aware of his every move. He did plan on some sort of revenge, but nothing that would do them any lasting harm. They had been a great help to him and the Ukatae already, and the prank they pulled had been harmless really. Perhaps he was offended because he'd been so easily tricked. But then again, that was their forte, wasn't it? That's why they had such a booming business. Harry said they were brilliant when they put their minds to it. Tom decided he would make plans to test that out in the future.

"You'll protect us from him, won't you, Harry?" George implored with the biggest puppy dog eyes Harry had ever seen.

"Um…no."

"Draco…" Fred started batting his eyes at the tall blond. Taller than even he and his brother now. And broader. That was a bit odd… and arousing. Fred couldn't help but be a bit envious of his little adoptive brother.
"Don't even think about it."

"Why the hell didn't you tell us he was Tom Riddle from the beginning?" the twins asked in sync. Draco and Harry looked at each other and grinned.

"Honestly, we wanted to see if something like this would happen," Draco answered.

"Yeah." Harry looked over at Tom who was conversing with Charlie. "Didn't think he would actually fall for any of your tricks."

"But look on the bright side. Now you can boast that you turned the Dark Lord into a canary." The blond Ukatae smirked. "It can be a huge selling point for you."

"Are you insane, Draco? No way are we going to tell anyone that," Fred said, waving his arms around hysterically.

"We'll be dead by the end of the night, so it doesn't matter anyway," George mourned, looking at the glaring Tom.

"Perhaps." Harry gave them an evil grin. "But I wouldn't try to Apparate again. We've put a block on your apparition ability."

Fred and George's mouths dropped open. "You're evil."

"Thank you."

Finally Harry took pity on them, as they seriously believed they were going to be dead by the end of the night. "Tom won't kill you. Stop worrying."

"Right. That's easy for you to say." The twins banded together and disappeared up the stairs.

"Love, did you really stop their apparition ability?"

"Hmm…oh, no. Just said that to scare them a little," Harry answered, his mind and ears preoccupied as soon as the twins had left them alone.

Harry was very aware of Mr. Weasley's anger and noticed him dragging Molly off to talk. Harry sat down across from Tom and closed his eyes, ignoring everyone else's conversations and focused on Arthur and Molly's dialogue. Draco, having an idea of what Harry was doing, moved on into the kitchen to see what the girls were up to.

"Molly, dear. I'm just having a bit of trouble understanding how you could invite them-him-here," Harry heard upon picking up the couple's voices. "After everything You-Know-Who has done to this family, to your family!" Harry looked at his hands in his lap. Arthur was no doubt speaking about Molly's deceased brothers.

"If you would talk to Tom, you would see he isn't the same-"

"Tom is it?" Harry was glad Arthur's voice sounded amused. "But he still did all those things!"

"Arthur Weasley! I thought you understood the need to give people second chances. Don't you think Tom deserves a second chance? After all, no one ever gave him a first chance, did they? He really is an eighteen year old boy now, and he has his soul back. I intend to see he gets a support system!"

"Just like Harry and Draco?" again, Arthur's voice was amused, and Harry could hear the love he had for his wife there as well. Harry breathed a sigh of relief. He'd been afraid Arthur would have
behaved just like Ron.

"Yes, just like those two."

"You're determined to adopt every single child who hasn't had a loving motherly upbringing, aren't you, love?" Arthur sighed. "I suppose if Harry thinks You-Know-Who has redeeming qualities, then so shall I. I do trust Harry's judgment. And I guess I'll tolerate Lucius Malfoy as well. Maybe being married to Sirius will curve his insults."

Harry grinned when he heard Molly snort. Harry agreed with her. No one could change Lucius Malfoy, not even his husband. He pulled out of Arthur and Molly's discussion and looked around, wondering where Severus, Lucius, and Sirius had gone. He'd seen them come in, and all of them had been in bad moods.

*They are out back. Mrs. Weasley told them to set up tables back there.*

Harry nodded even though Draco couldn't see him. He turned his eyes to the two sitting on the couch opposite him and watched Tom and Charlie interacting.

Tom caught Charlie eyeing the kitchen again, and he was intrigued. "You study dragons, correct?"

"Er…yeah. The colonies in Romania."

"So explain to me why you look like the kitchen holds death. There is nothing but women in there."

Harry sniggered, knowing exactly why Charlie seemed nervous of the kitchen.


"I agree. Your mother can be very scary."

"No, it's that Slytherin witch."

"Parkinson?" Tom raised an eyebrow. "You're joking."

"Do I look like I'm joking?" Charlie snapped. Then he realized whom he was talking to and scooted away a bit. "Sorry."

"What is so scary about a school girl?"

"They just come out and say things… When I was at Hogwarts, girls were never so direct."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Merlin, Charlie. You act as if your time at Hogwarts was centuries ago. It's only been a few years," he said, standing up. "I never knew you were so old fashioned. So prudish."

Harry heard Tom's snort and Charlie's sputtering, but didn't wait around for a reply. He quickly went into the kitchen where Pansy was once again trying a hand at cooking. Harry stood in the doorway and leaned against the frame, smiling when he saw Draco was also trying to help. Both Slytherins were more a hindrance than help and Hermione, Ginny, and Mrs. Weasley were looking on with a mixture of amusement and horror.

"No not like that, Pansy. You have to cut them into little pieces," Draco drawled as if he were a professional cook when Pansy started cutting carrots into big cubes.

"I'm not going to listen to you, Draco dear. You've never cooked anything your entire life."
"Well neither have you! Push over, I don't want any of your carrots in my stew!"

"It really doesn't matter how you cut the carrots..." Ginny ventured into their discussion, but quickly backed away when they both glared at her.

"Pay attention to how you stir, Draco! You're getting the stew all over the counter!" Pansy pointed at the one drop of stew on the counter.

"I don't need you to tell me how to stir. It's just like a potion..."

Harry snickered and passed them, heading out to the back yard where he found one small table set up, with all three wizards sitting around it. Lucius and Sirius were sitting beside one another, with Severus sitting across. Severus and Sirius were glaring at each other and no one was saying a word. Harry conjured a chair and set it up next to his uncle.

"What's going on?" he asked as he sat down. "I thought you were supposed to be setting up tables. One small table is not what Mrs. Weasley meant."

"They are trying to work out their differences," Lucius supplied.

Harry took a minute to study his godfather and uncle. "Less glaring and more talking might help," he advised and ducked before Severus could hit the back of his head.

"I said the same thing. They don't seem to hear."

"They're both very stubborn." Lucius nodded in agreement

"Excuse me. Stop talking as if we're not here," Sirius said.

"I have an idea. Sirius, you start by apologizing for all the taunts and pranks you pulled on Severus." Harry held his hand up when Sirius opened his mouth, effectively cutting off any words the Animagus might have said, because Harry was sure it wasn't going to be an apology. "And Severus you do the same thing."

"I have nothing to apologize for. He started it."

"Then apologize for continuing on with it. Really, if Draco and I can get over our differences..."

"That's completely different!" Sirius barked. "You two are soul mates."

"Just try, please." Harry gave his godfather a smile that would have shamed the sun, and both Sirius and Lucius blinked rapidly.

"Err...what were we talking about?" Sirius asked, looking at Lucius, who was staring at Harry with glazed eyes. They both looked confounded.

With the smile still plastered on his face, Harry turned to Severus. "Please apologize and get along. Please, Uncle Sev." Harry made his eyes wide, brilliant green jewels sparkling at the Potion Master from under long thick eyelashes. Severus began to blink rapidly, and then he turned to Sirius.

"I apologize."

"Now you, Sirius," Harry said and pinned Sirius was the same look.

"I'm sorry."
Lucius was the first one to recover, as Harry wasn't looking at him anymore. "That is a… useful skill. Dangerous for the rest of us, but very useful."

**May I move around, Master?**

**Of course, lovely. But stay close.**

Lucius watched as the snake on Harry's neck began to move. He'd previously thought it had simply been an ornament. The snake unwrapped herself and slithered down his arm. When it was on the table she began to enlarge.

"What kind of snake is that?"

"A viper. One of Nagini's offspring. Tom breeds them and she's a special one."

"What's her name?" Lucius asked, putting his elbows on the table and leaning in to peer at the snake. Harry grinned when his snake began to preen under Lucius' gaze.

"Where the bloody hell did that snake come from?" Sirius exploded, finally coming to his senses.

"Quiet! She might bite you if you scare her." Lucius put a hand on the table, his palm facing up and smirked when the snake slithered onto his hand, shrinking in size to fit completely in his palm.

"She's mine. Tom gave her to me. I haven't named her yet. Oh, and she won't bite unless I say."

"You should give her a name already," Sirius said, leaning down so his nose was nearly touching the snake's head. She lifted her head and flicked her tongue out to his nose. "Did Voldemort make her just for you? She looks just like you…well, except she's a snake. But with the black scales and those eyes…"

"Tom says he always planned to give her to me, but before we made the alliance, she was supposed to kill me."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"You wanna run that by me again," Sirius finally spoke, his voice a low growl and he began to glare at the innocent snake, which had yet to do anything bad.

"She was meant to assassinate me. But we all know that would never have worked out," Harry ended with a smug smirk, looking at Lucius.

"Probably not. You have too much good luck," The blond returned.

"How can you talk about it as if it were a joke, pup? He wanted this snake to kill you. How do you know his intentions have changed?"

"You're not using your head again, Black." Severus put his hand on the table and allowed the snake to slither onto it, and brought her up to his face to inspect her closely, while Lucius' hands disappeared beneath the table.

"Because Tom doesn't have those hateful feelings for me anymore and he gave her to me as a birthday present. Besides, we took a Wizarding Oath that prevents the three of us from backstabbing
each other. So he couldn't try and kill me even if he wanted to. Which he doesn't."

Sirius didn't seem to be finished with the argument and he tried to say something else, only his voice got caught in the back of his throat. Harry raised an eyebrow. Why was Sirius' face red all of a sudden? Sirius opened his mouth again, but then shut it with a snap and tightly closed his eyes. Harry looked at Lucius for an explanation, but the man's cold mask was firmly in place and his look of unconcern was completely normal.

"Padfoot? You okay?"

Sirius merely nodded and let his head drop to the table with a loud bang. Severus looked at Lucius, and then sneered at both of them before turning to Harry. "You should name her."

"Ah, yes…um…?" I should name you. Or…do you already have a name?

It is for the Master to name the familiar.

Oh, Harry wracked his brain for a brilliant name to give her, as he was already thinking that she was brilliant and deserved a name that fit, but he couldn't think of anything off the top of his head.

"I never had any trouble at all naming Hedwig." I can't think of anything at the moment.

You can continue to call me Lovely. I quite like when you call me that.

But that's not really a name. It's a term of endearment.

I like it.

Harry beamed at her. "She will be known as Lovely!"

"A good name. Simple. Very deceptive but also accurate," Lucius put in, and then smirked when Sirius, his head still planted on the table, groaned and his fingers tightened on the edge of the table. Harry's eyes went wide and only then noticed that Lucius' hands were under the table.

Severus swiftly stood and grabbed Harry's arm, pulling him up as well. "You're a bad influence!" he snapped to the married couple before dragging Harry back to the house.

"Molly," Severus said upon seeing Mrs. Weasley at the stove. "Lucius and Sirius are being inappropriate and setting a bad example for my nephew, and they have only set up one table."

Molly immediately dashed out to the back, leaving Severus smirking behind. Hermione was the only one left in the kitchen with Severus and Harry, and she cocked her head and peered at her... Harry wondered if boyfriend was the correct term. Just thinking about that made him shudder.

"Never took you for a tattle tale, Severus," she said sweetly. Harry thought it odd that her eyes flickered uncertainly when she looked at his uncle. What was going on now?

Severus smirked at her. He then grinned maliciously when Molly's scolding voice crashed in on them from outside, along with whelps from Sirius and outraged curses from Lucius. His grin soon faded, however.

"SEVERUS! YOU COME BACK OUT HERE AND HELP WITH THE TABLES LIKE I TOLD YOU TO!"

"Ha ha! That's what you get!" Harry said. Severus glared, removed Lovely from around his wrist
and gave her back to Harry. He nodded to Hermione, then left to help with the tables.

"He's a prude, isn't he?" Harry asked once Severus had left the kitchen.

"I suspect so," Hermione replied with a glare at the floor. "And you thought I was bad, but he… I'm only able to get reactions from him when I use Slytherin tactics, and I'm a Gryff so it's not like I know too many. And he's basically been ignoring me tonight. Hasn't said one word to me the entire evening!"

"I'm not too comfortable with this topic," Harry began as he moved to lean against the counter beside her and watched as Lovely removed herself from his body and slithered away into another part of the Burrow. "But I think Severus likes it when you get all high, mighty, and most of all a little bit evil."

"Really?" Harry had her complete attention now.

"Well yeah. Don't you remember at Tom's return party when you were up threatening people with your abilities… I was really impressed by the way. You can't tell me you didn't see how Severus was looking at you after that."

Hermione blushed, remembering all too well. "And yet, he still did nothing afterwards. And now he's ignoring me."

Harry felt the frustration coming from his best friend, but he didn't know what to say, and he was glad when there was suddenly a distraction coming from the living room.

"Hey! Who invited Zabini?"

"Mum did, so pipe down Fred!" Ginny hollered.

Harry made his way out of the kitchen and left Hermione to her work. The witch was just like Molly and enjoyed cooking when she was angry. Draco and Ginny were greeting Blaise at the door and the dark Slytherin gave his girlfriend a red rose then clapped his friend on the back. Harry's lips twitched in annoyance at the slight contact, but otherwise he was able to restrain the impulse he had to rip Blaise's throat out.

"Be right back," Blaise said. "I want to go give your mother these." He pulled a bundle of wild flowers out from behind his back.

"She's out back," Harry supplied.

"Thanks mate." Blaise waved at everyone on his way through, stopping for a moment to grin at Pansy, who had just cornered poor Charlie Weasley and was laying on the charm thickly. Blaise shook his head. The wizard was lost. He should tell Weasley to just give it up. Looking at Draco, he saw the blond was thinking the same thing.

Fred and George rushed away up the stairs, taking three steps at a time in their haste to get out of the room. Harry realized they were running because when Tom got up, he headed straight for them, and he didn't stop when they flew up the stairs.

Charlie had gone rather pale when Pansy took the seat beside him and the Dark Lord had simply smirked at Charlie as he left.

"Hello Charlie. I'm happy to see you again." Pansy brought a hand up to her hair and swept her bangs away from her bright twinkling eyes.
"Err…yeah?"

"Yes. Thank you so much for safely delivering me to Malfoy Manor."

"You're welcome." Charlie looked over at Harry and Draco for help, but they were both giving him unhelpful smirks.

"Although I have my Apparition license already," Charlie's eyes widened, "it was nice being accompanied by you." Pansy started to bat her eyelashes, and gave him a coy look. She sensed Charlie was preparing to escape, and so put a firm hand on his arm. "You train dragons don't you? I simply love dragons. That's probably the only reason why I became friends with Draco. Because I like his name. I mean, with his personality, I wouldn't have even bothered otherwise."

"Oi!"

"Well actually, we don't train the dragons. We simply study their behavior and protect them from being hunted into extinction."

"They live in colonies, isn't that right? It's true that they live as a family unit, correct?"

Charlie looked surprised for a moment, and then he actually relaxed. Talking about dragons was easy for him, and since Pansy hadn't been lying about being fascinated by them, they fell into a very nice interlude.

"Yes, the colony I'm studying now is very large, and even has grandparent figures who are well over two hundred years old…." 

"Let's go check on the twins," Harry said, and he and Draco made their way up the stairs and met Tom at the door of one of the rooms.

"Watch out for the slugs," he said to them before disappearing down the stairs again. The Ukatae entered what used to be Fred and George's room and spotted two small slugs making their way towards the door, twin trails of slime following after them.

"Eww!" Draco sidestepped them. "Harry you deal with those twats. I don't want to get my hands dirty."

Harry rolled his eyes. "You wouldn't get your hands dirty." He used his wand to do Finite, but that didn't work. "Hmm…. I wonder if it's supposed to be permanent," he thought aloud. The twins' anxiety and outrage doubled at Harry's words.

"Let's leave them like this. At least until after dinner so we don't have to worry about being pranked throughout the night."

"Draco, be nice and go ask Tom how to undo this."

When Draco left, Harry dropped his smile and grimaced. His back was getting worse; the pain was nearly unbearable. He could feel the wings trying to push through his skin. It wouldn't be long now, anyway. At least he wouldn't have to deal with the pain for much longer. But he had a feeling it was going to get worse before it got better.

"He refuses to cooperate," Draco said when he returned.

"He can't mean to leave them like this. Their prank only lasted a minute." Draco shrugged and seemed unconcerned. "Fine then. We'll just bring them down and show Mrs. Weasley what he did to
them." Harry conjured a box and floated the two slugs into it. "I'm sure she'd like to see."

When they returned downstairs, Tom came up and sneered into the box. "What do you plan to do with them?"

"We're going to show their mum."

Tom immediately grabbed the box. "No. No need to do that."

"Then turn them back." By this time, those in the living room, Ginny, Blaise, Charlie, and Pansy were all watching.

"I don't want to. They deserve it."

"That's just what I said," Draco put in. From the corner of his eye he caught Harry gritting his teeth, but when he turned to fully look at his mate, Harry instantly relaxed his face and avoided Draco's gaze. Stupid Gryffindor, Draco thought. Didn't Harry realize he knew him too well?

"Mrs. Weasley!" Harry yelled.

"Alright, fine! Merlin, you're no fun."

Tom dropped the box to the ground and whipped out his wand. He moved it around in a complicated and intricate pattern, and everyone watched as the slugs grew to be human sized, the box collapsing as they grew within it, before they returned back into humans. Fred and George lay there, sprawled on their stomachs, groaning and covered in slug slime.

"That's really disgusting," Ginny said.

"And it stinks!" Pansy exclaimed and quickly pinched her nose.

The twins pulled themselves up and everyone expressed their disgust as they watched the thick slime drip down Fred and George's bodies.

"You better clean that up quick or Mum will have your heads," Charlie said, not bothering to hide his enjoyment of their disgust.

Fred turned to Tom, while George busily scourgified them and the floor. "Thanks for not killing us, but were you really going to leave us like that?"

"You'll never know."

Harry moved to the kitchen once again to get away from Draco, as he was sure the blond would soon be able to see the pain he was in, and he didn't want Draco worrying about it or trying to make him go home. The bloke was really very protective, and Harry really didn't want to go home yet. He was enjoying his time back at the Burrow.

"Hermione, will you go out and light up the yard?" Molly asked the witch as he entered the kitchen.

"Of course." Hermione looked over and noticed Harry. "Would you like to help me, Harry?"

"Not particularly. I'll stay here and help Mrs. Weasley with whatever else needs to be done."

"All the food has been prepared already," Hermione said.

"Then I'll just taste some of it and talk to Mrs. Weasley. Is that alright?" he asked Molly.
"Of course. Here dear, try this. You need to eat more." Molly shoved a plate of biscuits under Harry's nose. Hermione cursed him under her breath as she breezed out into the darkened backyard. She hadn't noticed Lucius and Sirius coming back in and when she saw they weren't out in the back, she briefly wondered where they had gone.

She thought a moment about what kind of lightening they would need. She didn't want something that would be too bright, but enough light would be needed in order for everyone to see each other and the tables. She was happy to see all the tables had been set out side by side in a long line. Deciding on the lighting she wanted, Hermione crossed over to the first hedge closest to the house and began creating small pixie lights and spreading them throughout the bush. She worked quickly as there were many bushes, and she cursed Harry explicitly for not helping.

"That type of language does not become you," Severus said from behind. Hermione sneered at the bush in front of her.

"Push off, Severus. I need to concentrate. You've chosen the worst time to finally come and speak to me."

"Would you like my help?" Severus asked, ignoring her tone.

"Do I look like I need help?" she asked without turning around. She heard the crunch of leaves as Severus approached, and trembled when a finger caressed the back of her neck. She'd bundled her hair at the top of her head, leaving a few strands to frame her face and a few curls had fallen loose and lay against her nape. Severus eyed the bare flesh almost reverently.

"Yes you do."

Hermione scowled and jerked away from his touch. Severus moved away to start copying her lighting technique in the bushes she hadn't gotten to yet. She eyed him for a moment, and considered sending a hex his way. The wizard was a genius when it came to most everything, but could he honestly be this stupid in regards to a woman's wants? Or had he deliberately been ignoring her? With a sigh, Hermione went back to her lights.

After the bushes were completed, she conjured a dozen candles to float above the tables. Finally when all the lights were done and the dinner tables were awash in a golden glow, Hermione found Severus was staring at her with an intense look she didn't understand.

"What would you do if I suddenly hexed you, Severus?"

"Excuse me?"

Hermione sat down at a table and leaned back in a seemingly relaxed state, a small smile playing at her lips. "I asked what would you do if I hexed you. Like this..." she flicked her wand and cast a stinging hex at him. "Or this?" she raised her wand again.

"I warn you, Hermione...don't."

"Or you'll do what?" she stood and faced him, her eyes gone hard. Severus had only seen that look a couple of times, and it was indeed a look the Dark Lord must have taught her, because he couldn't help be just a little worried. Severus' eyes widened when his arm suddenly burned painfully. He touched the spot where the pain came from and drew his hand back to find a small amount of blood on it.

He looked up with wide eyes when Hermione began to laugh; a bone chilling cackle. "I really like that spell." She dropped the cackle for a giggle. "I'm glad Tom taught me the nonverbal version. He
teaches me a lot, you know. Some things you probably wouldn't expect, things you probably wouldn't like either. You may think he's stepping into your territory." She was all but purring at him now, purposely insinuating something was going on between herself and Tom Riddle.

Severus' heart rate had sped up the moment she'd hexed him, and the blood had left his face to fuel other parts of his body. Hermione waited patiently for Severus to say something and most importantly, do something, and when he didn't, she sighed, shook her head, and then went back into the house.

"You're clueless, Snape! And I thought all Slytherins were supposed to be smart," Sirius said, coming out with Lucius from behind one of the bushes. Severus ignored them and healed the small wound Hermione had caused.

"You really are an idiot," Lucius said as he passed. Severus scowled and slumped into a chair and glared at their retreating backs.

"Snape's a virgin, isn't he, Luce?" Sirius whispered loudly.

"Black! I swear I'm going to kill you!"

When Severus finally returned to the house, he found it empty and eerily quiet. "Where the bloody hell did everyone go?" Even Molly had deserted the kitchen. He moved through the house and stepped out onto the front porch, straining to hear something, anything. He was beginning to get worried when Harry came running around from the side of the house.

"Uncle Sev!" he hissed. "Come here. Quickly!"

"Are you alright? Where is everyone?"

"Everyone is fine, but something strange is happening. You have to come and see this. You'll never believe it unless you see for yourself. Oh Merlin, it's unbelievable! C'mon!" Harry finished his excited babbling then turned around and disappeared once again.

Severus quickly followed and was intrigued when he saw everyone was quietly standing at the side of the old garage. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Shhh!" Several people hissed at once. Harry reached out and pulled Severus up to the front where he had turned the wall transparent. They could see in, but those in the garage could not see out. Severus was thunderstruck when he noticed who was inside and due to a spell from Tom, they could all hear what was being said.

"I'm amazed you've gathered all these useless muggle items, Weasley," Lucius said staring at all the broken down muggle items laying around the garage.

"I agree they are useless now, but when they work, I assure you they are anything but useless, Malfoy," Arthur replied good-naturedly, his excitement of all things muggle making him forget about the animosity that had always been between them. "Take this for instance. This is called a sale cone…" he held the object up for Lucius to see.

Harry snorted. "It's a cell phone." Mr. Weasley still hadn't learned the proper names for things.

Lucius took the broken cell phone and studied it closely. "And what does a sale cone do exactly?"

Arthur grinned and bounced on his toes in his excitement to show off his collection, drawing a sneer from the tall blond. "Muggles use it to communicate with each other. They can talk to each other
instantly from wherever they are, no matter the distance. I believe it's called tecindology… or something."

"Instantly, you say?" Lucius' study of it seemed more intense now. "Just like our two way mirrors…"

"Yes, just like those. See, just like magic is the heart and soul of our world, this tecindology is the heart and soul of theirs. They really aren't as stupid as you think they are. But without magic, they've had to adapt in other ways…"

"Interesting… Can you show me more of this tecindology?"

"Somebody pinch me," Draco whispered. "I think I'm dreaming."

"Me as well," Molly and Sirius said at once.

"How did this happen?" Severus asked as they continued to watch Arthur show Lucius his collection of muggle artifacts. "And why does Lucius seem so interested?"

"Father always gets that look when he's thinking about business."

"Business?" Harry looked at his mate and Draco nodded. "Wonder what he's thinking."

"They were bullied into getting along," Tom answered Severus' question. "We didn't really think it would work. How Mr. Weasley got Lucius in there in the first place is a mystery."

"All right all."

"You are so busted!" Fred and George exclaimed, before dissolving into laughter.

"Imagine the great Lucius Malfoy interested in something muggle," Hermione said with a cheeky grin.

"Say cheese!" Ginny pulled a camera out of nowhere and took a picture before Lucius had a chance to move. Then she looked at Blaise. "How much do you think the Prophet would pay me for this?"

"Little Weasley, I'm warning you now. If I find that in the paper it'll be your head." Lucius swept passed everybody with his nose in the air and proceeded to ignore all the taunting.

"I want a copy of that," Harry said to Ginny.

"Me as well."

"Same here."

Almost everyone demanded a copy of the picture and Ginny promised to distribute the picture once developed for a small fee.

"Zabini is corrupting her! Imagine making her own flesh and blood pay for a little picture."

"It's a monumental picture," she replied to Fred.

"That was funny," Harry told Draco while taking his hand, and they all headed to the back yard. Since he hadn't helped Hermione with the lights, Harry offered to help her set the table, and she just
"All you have to do is wave your stupid wand. It's not any work at all," she snapped. Harry shrugged and waved his stupid wand, dressing the tables in a dark green tablecloth, and then added the tableware and then the copious amount of food.

When everyone was seated, Harry watched as all the guests began to load their plates and felt such peace and happiness watching them all. A year ago he would have checked himself into the St. Mungo's psych ward had he come across a gathering like this. First of all Arthur sat at one end of the connected tables with Lucius sitting beside him, and since Lucius had been caught discussing muggle things with Arthur, he did not hide the fact that he was interested in Arthur's collection, and they continued with their discussion as they ate. Sirius sat beside his husband, gazing lovingly at him, pride shining clearly in his eyes. Harry knew what it meant to Sirius that Lucius was trying to make an effort with Arthur. And Arthur… Arthur looked delighted, especially since Lucius was sincerely interested.

Beside Sirius were the twins, talking with Blaise and Ginny who sat across from them. Molly sat directly across from her husband, and she was quiet for the most part, watching everyone as Harry was doing. Beside her was Severus, and then Tom, and both wizards were talking quietly about a potion. Blaise was beside Tom, and Ginny sat between her boyfriend and Harry, and of course Draco was right beside his mate. Beside Draco was Charlie, and across from Charlie was Pansy.

Draco, Charlie and Pansy were discussing the different types of dragons and where they usually made their habitations. Hermione was sitting at the end next to Pansy, and was being very quiet.

Unlike Harry and Molly, she wasn't enjoying the group gathering. She was hardly eating and stared blankly at her plate.

"Harry, your back?" Severus suddenly inquired, leaning back in his chair to look at his nephew.

Harry swallowed the food in his mouth before answering. "Fine, Uncle Sev." He caught Draco looking at him from the corner of his eye. "I swear I'm fine."

"Don't lie to me, Potter," he murmured quietly.

"How can I lie to you if you never asked anything, Draco?" he asked sweetly, batting his eyelashes and smiling as he had done before with Severus, Lucius, and Sirius. It didn't exactly have the same outcome though, as Draco didn't forget what was being said. The smile just clouded Draco's mind with lust and he had to summon all his self-control to keep himself from Apparating himself and Harry to some place private. By the time the smile's power had faded, Harry was already engaged in conversation with Ginny.

Draco rolled his eyes. Harry was really too stubborn sometimes. It was then as he looked around that he noticed the state Hermione was in. "You're not eating, Hermione."

"I'm not really hungry now. It's okay, Draco." She produced a smile he at once knew was a fake. He didn't have to be the most intelligent person on the planet to recognize why she was upset. Why the hell was Severus keeping his distance? He thought his godfather and Hermione had settled everything between them. Weren't they a couple now?

**What is Severus doing sitting so far away from Hermione? Did he change his mind about her?**

Harry looked over Ginny's shoulder and glared at Severus. The wizard must have felt the stare, because he immediately turned to Harry, and was startled at the look of death in Harry's eyes. **I won't**
"Harry? Do you have something to say?" Severus asked as quietly as he could, even though three people sat between them, and all three heard and were listening.

"Not at this very moment," he replied and turned away.

After Draco's inquiry, Hermione tried to eat and act as if nothing was bothering her, and she started up a discussion with Draco about the Dark Arts. At one point during their discussion, Draco froze and his face went pale. "Draco?"

Draco didn't answer her. Instead he turned to Harry and spoke through clenched teeth. "Harry, love. Your very dangerous viper is slithering up my leg. Please remove her."

"Draco, you look like you are about to pass out," Pansy pointed out. Harry laughed and peered under the table where he saw Lovely was indeed slithering up his mate's leg.

**Lovely, I think you've got the wrong person.**

**No, Master. I knew this was your mate. He's afraid of snakes?**

**It would appear so. Come here before he does something unbefitting for a Malfoy. Screaming like a little girl, for instance.**

A little down the table, Tom laughed out loud, not even trying to conceal his amusement. "That would surely be a sight," he said.

Harry mentally agreed and wrapped Lovely around his neck, where she burrowed her head beneath his hair.

"You are making fun of me, aren't you?" Draco seethed. Harry used the smile once again to get out of having to lie to Draco. It worked to an extent. He only had Draco ignoring him for the rest of the meal.

Dinner soon ended, but mostly everyone sat at the table talking, in no hurry to move as everyone had stuffed themselves. Hermione and Molly were the only ones to move immediately, and Hermione helped Molly clean up before she said goodbye to all but Severus in the quickest possible manner, then Flooed back to her house, leaving everyone blinking in the whirlwind she left behind.

Hermione was glad Arthur had been able to connect her fireplace to the Burrow. It cut down tremendously on travel time. She promised herself the next day she would go and get her Apparition license. Once she was home, she went to her room, not bothering to speak to her parents, and allowed herself to cry out her frustrations.

Severus watched with a sinking heart as Hermione disappeared into the Burrow after having said goodbye to everyone but him, and as soon as they all recovered from the shock, fourteen pair of eyes turned on him, all of them glaring.

"What?" he snapped.

"Yes, Severus, exactly. What? What the bloody hell is wrong with you?" this came from Molly, who surprised the entire group.

"Mum, you cursed!" Ginny exclaimed.
"Not now, dear. I want to hear Severus' explanation."

"Why are you ignoring Hermione? She's been very patient with you. You can't be hot one minute and then go cold on her the next!" Sirius barked.

Severus glowered at them all and stood. "Thank you for the meal." He nodded curtly at Molly and returned to the house.

Harry immediately stood. "He's not getting away that easily." Harry went to kiss Molly's cheek, shook Arthur's hand, nodded to everyone. "I'll see you in a bit," he said to Draco before lightly kissing him and then he Apparated directly into Snape Manor and waited for his uncle there.

Severus was not surprised to find Harry waiting for him, and simply swept past him towards his study, with Harry following behind. He sat at his desk and leaned back in his chair, closing his eyes with a heavy sigh. Harry pulled up a chair, placed an elbow on the desk, and tucked a fist under his chin.

"Do you want to tell me what's going on?" Harry finally asked. Severus opened his eyes and directed his attention on Harry.

"I don't want to discuss my love life with you, Harry."

"What love life?" Harry practically yelled. "It looks like your love life is nonexistent!"

"Why must you be so nosy? I've already said I have no wish to discuss this with you."

"I'm being nosy because I love you," Harry said honestly and smiled when Severus' eyes widened. "Yes, that's right. I'll admit that I love my uncle; the greasy snarky git who is Severus Snape. And I love Hermione too. I'm not leaving until you explain yourself. Is it that you don't want to be with Mione? Because if that's true, then you should tell her."

"That's not it, Harry."

Severus sighed into his hands. Merlin, why was he having this discussion with a seventeen year old? He supposed he should get used to having to lay his feelings out for Harry, as the Gryffindor was now a permanent part of his life, and Harry never let up when he knew something was bothering someone he cared about.

"I don't understand your reply. What's not it?"

"I want Hermione in my life," he explained. "But she's young. Her feelings might change. I'm giving her the space and time to make that decision before I take things further."

"You're afraid to get hurt," Harry said, nodding. "That's all you had to say. You're afraid to get hurt."

"Don't make me sound like an insipid school girl."

"Then don't try to turn Hermione into one either. She's not a little girl. Hermione is a woman and she's made up her mind. She's thought about this and knows exactly what she wants, Severus. She always has." Harry began to wave his hands in the air in annoyance. "She's always the one to think things through, no matter what the situation, which really gets on my nerves, by the way. There is no need for you to take your time. The longer you take, the more she doubts herself."

"She shouldn't doubt herself…"
"That's easy for you to say. But when you feel about someone the way she feels about you, and then that person decides to ignore you, your world starts to crumble, piece by bloody piece."

"You're speaking from experience," Severus murmured and Harry nodded.

"Yes, and if Draco and I hadn't been forced together by the bond, I'm not sure we would have ever revealed our feelings to each other. And it hurt, Severus. It hurt so much to think Draco hated me. Tom tried to use that against me when I was in that magical coma. A fake Draco came to me and told me he would never want me, he could never love someone like me, and that he would be much happier if I remained trapped in the coma. If the real Draco hadn't shown up then, I would have stayed there, just because I thought it would have made the Draco in my mind happy.

"Last year… Last year was horrible, Severus. I was so depressed, watching Draco from afar. Having him ignore me… it hurt so fucking much, you have no idea."

Severus nodded and closed his eyes in thought. Harry didn't want to interrupt him so he stood and went to look at all the books lining the wall. The books easily bored him so he called for Merry a moment later and asked for some warm milk before moving on to the mahogany cabinet and opened it up and made Severus a drink.

"Here. Maybe you just need to calm your nerves." Severus accepted with a smile and drank it. He watched Harry move away again and smiled. He watched Harry for a moment more and frowned when Harry hissed in pain after having stretched his arms over his head, making his shirt shift over his back. Harry quickly dropped his arms and used the return of the house elf to keep from seeing if Severus had noticed his discomfort.

"Thanks, Merry. Oh and a cookie! Double thanks." Merry giggled and popped away, leaving a happy Harry munching on his cookie.

"Why is it every time you're here, you need to eat cookies?" Severus asked on his way over to Harry.

"Have you tasted these cookies?" Severus simply raised an eyebrow. "That's what I thought. They're bloody awesome! You should give Merry a raise!"

Severus shook his head in amusement. "You're getting excited about a cookie, Harry. What kind of self respecting dark creature are you?"

"Anyways… Have you finished thinking about your situation yet?" Severus nodded.

"Yes." And then he smiled. "I will apologize to Hermione about my behavior tomorrow. Now, I want to see your back." Severus moved to pull the back of Harry's shirt up, but the Ukatae quickly moved away.

"No, it's okay Uncle Sev. Hey, it's not too late. Why don't you apologize to Hermione tonight? She'll be able to sleep better. If I know her, she'll be up all night worrying," Harry said, working on his uncle's softer side, knowing full well that since he still wanted Hermione that meant Severus would not like her in any distress. "I know where she lives."

"I'm not going to her parent's home. Never going to happen."

"If you're serious about this relationship, you'll eventually have to go there," Harry pointed out. But Severus merely crossed his arms over his chest and shook his head.
Hermione's head popped up from her pillow the second she heard the pop of Apparition, and her eyes widened when she saw Draco smirking down at her. "Draco! What are you doing here?" It was strange that she did not find his sudden appearance in her bedroom disturbing; especially with what she was wearing as she'd changed for bed already. Probably because she knew him so well now. Still she was curious as to why he'd just popped in, and without Harry as well. For a moment she worried something had happened to Harry, but the smirk Draco was giving her indicated that that couldn't be the reason.

Instead of saying anything, Draco simply studied her for a moment. He frowned when he saw she'd been crying at one point. He pushed the worry away when he remembered why he was there in the first place. And look, she was dressed perfectly too! He laughed gleefully in his mind as he lunged forward, scooped her up, and Apparated away, even as she shrieked in outrage.

"Put me down this instant, Draco Malfoy! I'll gouge your eyes out!" she screeched the moment they'd reappeared in a room within his manor. Draco unceremoniously dumped her onto a velvet green Contessa style settee, smirked one last time, and Apparated out of the locked room.

"What the bloody hell is going on!" she yelled. Hermione stood up and marched to the door, ignoring the beautifully decorated Lounge she was in, only to find it heavily warded and locked, and dammit, she didn't even have her wand. Her chin dropped to her chest, and Hermione balled her hands into trembling fists. Her magic was being pumped and infused with her outrage and frustration of the situation; so much that the door started to shake from the pressure of it.

"You never cease to amaze me, Hermione. Where were you hiding all that power?"

Hermione closed her eyes, and if anything her fists clenched tighter. "I will kill those two," she hissed.

"I warned Harry you would not react well to being abducted from your home."

Severus studied the young woman from across the room and understood why she was so angry. She must have been in bed. Her hair was down and no longer straight, but back to its wild bushiness. He loved her hair like that; completely natural and untamed. She was dressed in a black tank top, revealing to him tanned toned arms and she wore small red/gold striped boxers, showing off her long sculpted legs. The least Draco could have done was see to it that she was dressed in more, but knowing his godson, Draco was probably laughing it up with Harry.

"Hermione, will you look at me?"

The witch had to force her body and mind to relax before turning around to face him. She cocked her hip, placed one hand there while her other arm wrapped around her stomach, and began to tap her bare foot impatiently. "And what do you want, Severus?"

Severus was upon her before she could even finish speaking, and she gasped when he pushed her against the door and covered her body with his. Those long fingers that she dreamed about constantly simultaneously caressed her neck and ran through her hair. The vision she'd made had wiped away any words he had planned to say.

"Severus!" she gasped again when he pushed his erection against her, wide surprised cinnamon eyes darkened and captivated him, and Severus wouldn't have been able to move away even if he wanted to. Instead, he dipped his head down and captured her lips in a smoldering kiss that had her moaning, the sounds coming deep from within her chest rising and swirling, trapping them both in an enthralling embrace. After a moment of coaxing, Hermione opened up to him and he swept his tongue inside, groaning as their tongues met and entangled, their tastes mixing. Severus tried to
express in his kiss what he wanted to say in words and only hoped it was working. Apparently not.

Hermione regained her senses and pushed him away enough so that their lips were no longer locked together, but Severus refused the release his grip from where his arm had traveled to wrap around her petite waist.

"I demand you release me! After your abominable treatment of me, how dare you assume you can take that sort of liberty with me? You're a bore, Severus!"

"I'll admit, I probably deserve that," he whispered, his breath caressing her cheek. "But you don't understand how I was feeling."

"How could I? You're a tight-lipped wizard, Severus. How can anyone get to know-"

"Listen." Severus leaned forward until their foreheads were pressed together. "You're young, Hermione, and I'm...well I'm not young."

"You're not even middle aged yet! Not by Wizarding standards."

"Will you let me finish?" he asked with patience that he certainly didn't feel. Especially with her warm body still pressed against his. Then the little vixen shifted on purpose and smirked when he groaned and closed his eyes. Severus had to catch his breath before he could speak again.

"I thought perhaps you needed time before we moved further. I didn't want you to think... I simply wanted you to be sure you knew what you wanted because I'm very sure that when we move forward, we'll move forward quickly."

Hermione felt as if her heart would burst out of her chest and she had to blink away tears. The look she gave Severus was so warm, so full of love, that he dropped the embrace and took a step back in surprise.

"Oh, Severus. Why didn't you just say you were afraid of heartbreak? You silly man!"

Severus scowled at the witch. This was the second time tonight he'd been accused by a blasted Gryffindor of being afraid. He would not stand for it. He was a bloody Slytherin for Merlin's sake!

"I thought we discussed this already," Hermione continued. "I've made my decision. I made it before I even thought you and I were possible and I will not change my mind." Hermione took his hand and led him back to the settee and pushed him onto his back, and then she straddled his lap. "I forgive you for ignoring me."

"Thank you."

Severus' large hands slid over the soft skin of her shoulders to caress her back, while Hermione's mouth was soft and warm upon his, drawing out all his long buried desires. As he allowed himself to drown in her attentions, Severus swore he would never run from Hermione again.
The manor was a dark smudge in the dimming moonlight that night. The forest surrounding Malfoy Manor was eerily quiet; it was as if the forest had been put to sleep. Put to sleep just as the moon's natural light was being dimmed. However, if one were to look closely, they would see shadows. Shadows with gleaming eyes shining brightly from an unknown light, flitting from one area to another to watch the large manor. One shadow hovered near a tree at the edge of the forest closest to the manor, watching it intently. It did not move for a long time and then only shifted slightly when other shadows converged and joined it.

"Our search is over," one of the newly arrived shadows spoke quietly, a soft feminine tinkling sound brushing through the air, the earth around them feeling caressed by a language not heard in centuries.

"We are positive?" the first shadow whispered.

"There is no doubt," said another shadow speaking in a harsh tone. "The house is bleeding from the power of two very strong Ukatae auras from within."

"This is exciting! Shall we go and see them?" the last shadow spoke excitedly and none too quietly either.

"Shut your mouth, Ozemir!" The harsh speaking shadow hissed then shifted to the first shadow "Falde? Why did we bring this idiot?" he demanded to know.

"Calm yourself, Brumek. I believe he will be very beneficial to our quest."

"We didn't need to bring him!" Brumek persisted.

"This mission entails I use my warrior and healing skills. I'm not here as a scholar as that is not my profession. Ozemir is a Scholar. I am a scholar hobbyist," Talyn replied, the only female of the group.

"And how dare you describe me as an idiot!" Ozemir sounded scandalized.

"Quiet, all of you." Falde dissolved his Shadow, becoming visible to even the human eye, and stepped past the edge of the trees, his tall broad form standing out in the darkness. "We are not to meet them yet. Simply to observe, protect, and gather information. Is this understood?"

“Yes sir," Ozemir and Talyn answered, while Brumek studied his Commander. There was something about this particular mission that had Falde on edge. On edge and slightly more excited than Brumek had seen the commanding warrior be in a very long while.

“Very well. You three stay here. I'm going closer. I'll return in a few minutes.” Falde sped off into dark, leaving three impatient Ukatae behind.

"Why does he get all the fun?" Ozemir whined.
"Draco, I'm feeling something strange," Harry called from the bathroom where he was lounging on his stomach in a bath filled with hot water and fragrant bubbles.

"Your back?" Draco called from their bedroom.

"No it's not that. I'm not sure what it is. You don't feel anything weird?"

Draco rolled out of bed where he'd been working on his summer homework and joined Harry in the bathroom, conjuring a plush body length cushion and set it down before sitting next to the tub. "Not really. Just the wards around the manor, Hermione and Severus' emotions…" Draco grimaced. "There must be some way we can block that out. Some emotions I don't want to feel from other people."

Harry nodded in agreement and wrapped his arms around the bath pillow stuck to the edge of the tub where his head lay. "Hermione is going to go on a war path once she leaves that room, regardless of how happy she is that Severus has come to his senses," he said after a time.

"Most likely. We'll just have to disappear for a bit." Draco flashed him a grin, his long canines sparkling in the light of all the candles within the room and his eyes spoke volumes about what he wanted to do while they were in hiding.

"You're impossible." Harry began to smile, but his lips instead twisted into a grimace and he buried his face against the bath pillow. Instead of saying anything, Draco knelt beside the tub and dipped his fingers under the bubbles; lightly caressing Harry's back, even though he knew it would not help Harry. It was mainly to soothe himself. He hated to see Harry in pain.

Draco stopped when the smell of blood reached his nose. Sweeping away the bubbles over Harry's back, he clenched his teeth. The skin was open in some places and blood was oozing out of the wounds. He could also see the bone or whatever of the wings poking through just below Harry's shoulder blades, and more disturbing were the large round shapes that seemed to be protruding up just under Harry's skin. They looked like large elliptical bubbles.

Neither of them saw a shadow moving within the bedroom or a pair of teal eyes peering into the bathroom at them, nor could they feel the stranger's presence as he studied the young lovers closely.

"Draco, help me up please? I'm dizzy and I don't want to pass out in the bath."

Draco slid an arm under him, ignoring the fact his clothes were getting wet and bloody, and helped Harry sit up and then stand. He grabbed a towel and wrapped it around the wavering brunet's waist after helping him out of the bath. Falde took one look at the smaller Ukatae's back and knew the little one would need to be seen to immediately.

"Draco…" the pain in his back tripled, like a thousand stabbing knives impaling his flesh and his eyes rolled to the back of his head as he pitched forward into a painless blackness.

"Harry!"

Draco caught Harry before he could kiss the marble floor and rushed him to the bed, gently placing him down on his stomach. "Trife!" A second later, a house elf popped in. "Summon Severus and my father. Quickly!"

"Yes, Master Draco!"

"Talyn." The female looked up from studying her perfectly sharpened nails and raised a dark blue
"Yes, sir." Talyn's shadow disappeared and she stood at attention to wait for instruction.

"The wings of the submissive are ready for release. You will use your knowledge as a Ukatae healer to help in any way you can. You will not speak of us, you will not allow them any knowledge of our kind in any way, and you will stay only for as long as needed. If they ask you anything, you will not answer unless it has to do with the wings. Is this understood Talyn?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Go."

While Draco waited for his father and Severus to arrive, he removed the towel around Harry's waist and dressed him in boxers. He knelt on the bed beside Harry and began dabbing away the blood from the Gryffindor's back. A few moments later Severus and his father rushed in, closely followed by Hermione and Sirius. They rushed to the bed and gasped collectively upon seeing the condition Harry was in.

"He passed out." Draco's voice wavered and he looked at the four with wide worried eyes. "Nothing I do helps. I don't know what to do for him."

Hermione moved around the bed and sat next to Draco and put a comforting arm around his back. "He'll be fine, Draco. His body probably put him in an unconscious state so that he wouldn't have to feel the pain."

"That is correct," came a heavily accented voice. Everyone turned towards the far corner where the voice had come from, four wands pointed at the being standing there. She quirked an eyebrow, looking at the wands curiously, but did not move.

"She's a Ukatae!" Hermione said in awe.

Just like Harry and Draco, the lady was unusually beautiful, pale, and very tall. Her hair was a midnight blue pulled back into a long braid that reached the back of her thighs. Her face was exquisite, with eyes that were wide and a deep dark blue. Her nose was small and pixie like and her lips were dark red, plump, and in a permanent pout. Her clothing was rather scandalous, in Hermione's opinion. She was hardly wearing anything at all! But then Hermione remembered she was still dressed in her tank top and boxers, and blushed at her hypocritical thoughts. And when she looked closer, Hermione realized the Ukatae was dressed like a warrior or hunter, and the witch supposed the small dark animal skinned shorts and bikini type top were helpful and did not hinder her movement if the Ukatae needed to move quickly, or got in a fight.

Along with the small tight outfit, she wore a dark blue cape pinned around her neck by a beautiful broach of a strange design. The lady was also wearing a large belt that held a dagger on one side and a sword on the other. In her hand she gripped a spear with the blade pointed up to the ceiling with the simple wooden staff planted on the ground. Hermione eyed the spear for a moment. The weapon looked like it was an extension of the Ukatae's body. Hermione would bet all her money that the female Ukatae was deadly with it.

Draco lowered his wand the moment he realized she was of his kind. "Can you help him?" he pleaded.

"You are the mate?"
Draco nodded. The lady moved forward, her spear along with her. "Please step away," she told everyone.

"No," Draco growled.

"You may be one of his kind," Sirius said, his wand still pointed at her, "but we'll be damned if we're going to leave him alone with you."

The *Ukatae* frowned at them, her eyes flashing dangerously. Hermione stood up and held her hand out in a friendly manner. "No offense but we don't know you and Harry is very precious to us."

"So if you're going to do anything to him, you had better be prepared to have us all looking over your shoulder," Severus put in rather rudely. Hermione turned and pinned him with a glare.

After a moment, the *Ukatae* seemed to understand and nodded. She set her spear against the wall, withdrew her sword and also set that aside. She climbed onto the bed and surprised everyone when she straddled Harry. First thing she did was unhook a glass vial from her belt, opened it and poured a clear liquid over Harry's back and then poured some into her palm. She absently handed the vial out to someone, and Hermione was the one to grab it and hold it for the lady. They watched as she rubbed the clear liquid over both hands and Hermione assumed it was a disinfectant of some sort. Once the *Ukatae* was done with that she pulled out the dagger from her belt and brought it towards Harry's back, only to be stopped by a clawed hand gripping her wrist rather painfully.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" Draco snarled in her face. Everyone watched with bated breath. They seriously thought Draco was going to kill her. But the *Ukatae* simply raised an eyebrow at him and sighed.

"I'd forgotten what mates are like." She turned to Hermione, Severus, Lucius, and Sirius. "I have no mate, you see. I'm always forgetting how protective and dangerous they are." She turned back to Draco and began to speak to him as if he was a baby, speaking softly, soothingly. "You want me to help, yes? I need to cut the skin where the actual wings are so that they can be pulled out." She gestured with her free hand to the area where the skin was pushed up and rounded. "The wings are not like the bone; they will not be able to push through the skin. Do you understand?"

"What makes you qualified to do this?" Lucius spoke up. "If that is what needs to be done, then we will call our personal Healer."

"I am here for this specific reason and I am ready to do it now." Back to Draco. "I promise no harm will come to your mate."

"And where exactly did you come from?" Lucius drawled. The *Ukatae* ignored him.

"Draco, let her do what she needs to do," Hermione coaxed. "She's obviously one of you, and… Hey, do you have wings?" No one could see if she had wings due to the cape hiding her back.

"Yes. *Ukatae* females, regardless of sexual orientation, always grow wings when they've reached the age of puberty. Male *Ukatae* only get their wings when they've found dominating male mates." She paused a moment as she tenderly explored Harry's back with her fingers. "And somebody had to do to me what I'm about to do to this young one."

"So she's been through this before, Draco."

Draco released the lady elf's wrist and moved back just a little. The *Ukatae* returned to what she was doing, well aware that the mate was watching her every move closely; he may be young, but he was still very dangerous. In her right hand she held the dagger, and with her left hand she felt around
Harry's back searching for the outside boundary of the wing sacks. As the Ukatae put the tip of the dagger against Harry's skin, Hermione rushed to the bathroom to grab a few towels and set them down beside the healer.

"Darvu taemie," The healer said absently, and Hermione guessed that was thank you in the Ukatae language. Hermione frowned when she realized she didn't have her journal so she could write that down.

The healer paused just before she made the cut. "You are called Draco, correct?"

"Yes."

"I need you to put your hand on your mate's head, Draco. Block out his consciousness. We do not want him to wake before I've finished cutting."

"How am I supposed to keep him from waking up?" Draco asked even as he followed the healer's directions.

"If he starts to regain consciousness, you will feel it. You'll push his wakeful mind back just like you'd push a physical being back. It does sound confusing, but if he starts to wake your instinct will kick in, and you'll know exactly what to do."

"All right."

Draco trusted this Ukatae knew what she was doing, so he listened without malice to her words, but he swore if she messed Harry up in anyway, he was going to rip her throat out; quite literally. She glanced at him sideways and he knew she understood this too.

But he had nothing to worry about because she really did know what she was doing, and it only took five minutes for the healer to do her work. First she took her dagger to the bumps just under Harry's shoulder blades, cutting only a small line horizontally on each side to allow the cartilage to be completely free as they would need to be before the wings could come out. She nodded in approval when the joints tried to move on their own as if wanting to spread out. Then she made two long vertical incisions, one cut three inches to the left and right of Harry's spine just under each joint.

"I've cut through muscles, but it will all heal perfectly once I'm done." She spoke quietly as if sensing everyone's worry. She put the dagger down and slid two fingers into the cuts, whispered a few words to stop the blood flow and to protect the wounds from the open air and prodded around until her fingers were beneath the large sacks. Then she pulled them out.

"That… is really disgusting," Sirius said. "Those don't look like wings to me."

"Siri, please don't be rude. Remember your manners," Lucius murmured, but he was thinking the same thing. The wings she'd just pulled out looked like large gray slimy…

"What you are looking at are the wing sacks," the healer explained as she and Hermione wiped the remaining blood away. "The wings are inside these membranes and will remain there for another week."

"Sort of like a caterpillar, right? It has to make that cocoon and stay there before it can turn into a butterfly?" Hermione asked, and smiled when the Ukatae nodded.

"Yes, exactly like that."

"It looks like someone threw up large hairballs honestly," Sirius said, unable to restrain himself any
"Black, just stop talking! Lucius, put his muzzle on already," Severus hissed.

Lucius looked at his husband and an eyebrow rose dramatically. Sirius scowled, but otherwise remained silent. Sirius shouldn't have said it, but that's exactly what it looked like, especially after the healer wiped all the blood off the sacks.

Lucius watched the nameless *Ukatae* as she poured more of the clear liquid into the open wounds and Harry twitched, scaring the daylights out of Draco.

"He's fine. Natural reaction. It happens every time, I assure you."

"Whatever you say."

The *Ukatae* nodded before placing her hands over the wounds and whispering more words, and everyone watched as the wounds healed over perfectly, all except the cuts at the joints under Harry's shoulder blades. Hermione asked about those.

"The body will need to heal that on its own. The skin will need to stretch over the joints, as they are now extra appendages. Just like fingers I suppose. He will have to keep bandages on those until it is finished growing over the new cartilage." She turned back to Draco. "But at least now you'll be able to keep him from being in pain." She smiled when Draco sighed with relief. The healer inspected her work to make sure everything was as it should be, gave a nod, and then crawled off Harry.

"How is Harry supposed to go around dressed with those on his back?" Lucius inquired. "Will they not be irritated if he puts clothes on?"

"Good question, human," she replied and Lucius sneered at her. "In about an hour the sacks will deflate and become hard flat shells, after which wearing clothes is possible. Once the shell is hardened, nothing can hurt the wings and he will not feel the sacks at all. Over the course of the week the sacks will dry out, as will the wings inside until the wings are ready for the open air, then the sacks will molt. Nothing else has to be done. Nature will take its course once again." The *Ukatae* bowed her head to them and turned away to pick up her sword and stow it back in its sheath upon her hip belt.

"Thank you for your help." Draco slid off the bed and held out his hand to her. The *Ukatae* cocked her head and studied his hand as if she didn't know what it was and then her eyes brightened with humor.

"Ah, it is how you mortals greet each other, yes? We *Ukatae* do this for formal greetings and dismissals." She held her hand out with her fingers pointed to the ceiling. Draco quickly caught on and imitated her, but when he made to touch their palms together, she shook her head and he stopped a hair's breath away.

"We do not touch hands, but bow over them." Again he did as she did.

"Thank you," he said again. The female of his kind studied him for a minute, before she broke out with a childlike smile.

"It was a pleasure meeting you, Draco. We will meet again," she promised before turning. She grabbed her spear and headed for the shadowed corner she'd appeared in.

"But wait!" Hermione called out. "You're going to leave? Harry and Draco have been waiting to meet more *Ukatae*. You can't just leave!"
But the *Ukatae* continued on and faded away into the shadows.

"And you said I was rude," Sirius said to Lucius.

"Report," Falde asked immediately upon Talyn's return.

"There were four humans in the room with the two of our kind; three wizards and a witch. They all seem to be family. One of the humans is certainly the father of the dominating mate. They bore a very strong resemblance. Both *Ukatae* are male and they are mates, obviously. Thank you very much for keeping that a secret, by the way." She paused, seeing Falde's frown and sighed. "Yes, I forgot about mates and their reactions. Moving on... These *Ukatae* are very young, but very, very powerful. I only spoke to the humans about the wings and explained what I was doing and why." Talyn frowned as she thought about the dark haired *Ukatae's* wings.

"Something wrong?"

"The one with the wings, his name is Harry... His wing sacks were the largest I've ever seen. And I don't mean marginally bigger... his wings are going to be massive. No one has wings the size of what his will be like."

She let that set in to her comrades. Wing size, among other things, depicted strength and power among the hierarchy in the *Ukatae* world.

"Wonderful," Brumek muttered sarcastically. "Just something else for the Council to bicker about."

"Were you able to determine what the colors will be?" Ozemir asked, his crystallized violet orbs blinking rapidly in excitement.

Talyn shook her head. "No. Another odd point. Usually you can get some indication, but his wing sacks were a solid gray color. Though since his hair is black, I'd say black and... I was unable to see what color his eyes are."

"Green," Falde murmured, staring at the ground and apparently very lost in thought. Finally he looked back to her. "You are sure he has wings in the sacks? Could it be his wing growth is defective since you could not see through the membrane?"

"I felt the wings through the sacks. He has the wings."

"We'll have to wait and see then. Good job, Talyn."

Talyn flashed as grin. "As always, sir."

Ozemir approached the commanding warrior. His long white hair swinging as he walked. "There's something about these two, hmm? Something you're not telling us?"

"Yes," Talyn piped in. "What's so different about these two? Aside from the fact they are the first humans to change into *Ukatae* on their own in centuries?"

Falde glanced at them and then back at the manor. "We'll take shifts watching. Two at a time."

Clearly Falde wasn't going to answer any questions at this point.

Harry remained unconscious throughout the night but surprisingly was awake before even Draco in the early morning. He sighed with relief when noticing his back didn't hurt so much; only a slight
When Harry began to get restless from lying awake in bed, he stretched in feline fashion as he pushed himself up off his stomach, and twisted around to sit. Having remembered what happened last night, the fainting incident, he realized Draco had probably been up for most of the night worrying about him so he left his mate alone to sleep and went to the bathroom for a shower. As he passed the mirror on his way to the shower stall, Harry caught sight of something strange and he slowly turned so that he was looking over his shoulder to stare at his back's reflection. His eyes widened in horror.

"What the bloody fuck is this?" he yelled, appalled by the sight of the things on his back. He didn't know what they were, but he knew for certain they weren't the damn wings he'd been expecting. "I'm not going to walk around with these disgusting looking things. Hell no, fuck that!"

_Pipe down, Harry. You're so loud that you can be heard in Hades,_ Draco grumbled.

_Sorry, love. Go back to sleep._

_That was my intention. And for your information, in case you're thinking of doing something incredibly idiotic like cutting those things off... they aren't your wings. Those are wing sacks._

_Oh._ Harry peered at his back again and studied the wing sacks more. _Which means..._ He didn't want to sound stupid, but he really didn't get it. No natural instinct was helping him on this one.

_Meaning your wings are inside, you lovely idiot. Wings will be out in a week. Now I'm going back to sleep._

"A week," he muttered, shaking his head. Harry stripped off his boxers and was about to step into the shower when Draco called out.

"Harry! Your bloody owl is creating more noise then you were! Come and open the window for her already."

Harry hurried out of the bathroom, unconcerned that he was completely naked, and grinned to himself when he heard Draco inhale loudly upon his appearance. He threw open the French doors, and cooed to Hedwig as she landed on his outstretched arm. "Hello, girl. Have a nice hunt last night?"

Hedwig hooted softly at him. Harry moved to Draco's vanity and plucked his emerald green robe up from the chair; fully aware of his mate's silver eyes following his every move. "Thought you were going back to sleep," he said as he tied the robe closed around him.

"You're a bastard, Harry."

"No I'm not. I'll have you know my parents were married." Harry turned back to Hedwig and she stuck out her foot. "What do you have for me? Ah, I've been expecting this. Wonder what took them so long."

"What is it?"

"A summons to Gringotts to go over my inheritance. I'm wanted there this morning." Harry sat
beside Draco where the blond continued to lay and passed him the rolled up parchment. Draco received the letter and scanned the contents before frowning.

"You should have received this the day after your birthday."

"I know. Dumbledore probably had something to do with it. We'll see when we get there."

Draco sat up and suddenly his entire attention was on the parchment. "You want me to go with you?" he asked and then immediately cringed at the nervousness in his voice.

"Why wouldn't I?"

Draco shrugged and tried to hide his embarrassment over the fact that he'd suddenly been unsure whether Harry wanted him tagging along around him so much. He lay back down and stared at the ceiling and refused to meet Harry's eyes.

"Unless… unless you don't want to come with me," Harry replied after a moment. "If that's the case I won't pressure you or anything."

Draco felt the bed shift as Harry stood, heard him murmur a bye to his owl, and then went back to the bathroom, shutting the door quietly behind him. Suddenly, Draco had the urge to laugh. What was up with today? Was it Insecurity Day or something? Draco threw back the covers, prepared to go in the bathroom and reassure his mate by acting like a Hufflepuff for a fraction of a moment, but just as he stood another owl was demanding to be received.

"Bloody owls…" A brown barn owl flew in when opened the door and after the letters were delivered, Draco shooed the owl away. "Hmm, Hogwarts letters…"

That reminded him that they needed to get the ball rolling with making Tom a Durmstrang transfer so that they would have everything ready by September 1st, which was only a few weeks away. Draco promised to talk to Hermione about that later in the day. He was just about to enter the bathroom when someone knocked on the door.

Draco clutched the door frame in his hands and squeezed it in frustration until the wood beneath his fingers groaned under the pressure. "Bloody hell! Is this also keep Draco away from the boy-who-lived-to-be-shagged day? Fuck!" With one last wistful look towards the already running shower, he turned away from it, peevd that he was being disturbed from sharing what would have been a very lovely interlude with Harry, and crossed the bedroom to the door. He yanked the door opened and glared at his godfather.

"I was about to be busy."

"As long as you aren't now…" Severus swept past Draco into their room.

"What are you doing here so early anyway?" Draco moved across the room and shut the bathroom door before turning back to his godfather.

"I've come to check on Harry and to tell you to get dressed. You will be taking a trip to Durmstrang this morning for an appointment with Karkaroff. I assume you've gotten your Hogwarts letters."

Draco nodded and pointed to the letters on the bed.

"You should open yours." Severus sounded unusually pleased.

"Why?" Draco asked even as he picked his letter up. "I already know what's in it. Same thing as last year, just updated text books." He opened the letter and looked through the contents before smirking.
"I'm Head Boy. The idiots made me Head Boy… I wonder who's been made-"

"I'm Head Girl!" They heard a shout from down the hall and footsteps rapidly approaching the open door. "I'm Head Girl!" Hermione squealed as she ran in, then upon seeing Severus was there, she jumped into his arms and began to plant kisses all over his face. Severus allowed her dramatics for more time than Draco would have thought his godfather capable of handling.

"What? Did you spend the night again, Hermione?" he asked, though she didn't answer him. She probably had. Hermione had been given a permanent room at the manor, and she had a full wardrobe as well, which would explain why she was already dressed in beautiful silk blue robes for the day.

"I thought after everything that happened this summer I wouldn't have gotten it. I was sure Dumbledore wouldn't allow me being Head Girl." She slid out of Severus' arms and smiled brightly at the room in general. Clearly lost in blissful thoughts of being Head Girl.

"Because of your grades, you were already chosen to be your year's Head at the end of sixth year. Dumbledore is now on probation due to his being questioned by the Ministry. He has no say over these things. It is the School Board of Governors who have the last say."

"But I really received this honor because of my grades, right?" Hermione asked, chewing on her lower lip. "I don't want it to be just because we have plans this coming year, and my being Head Girl would make things easier… I know we control most of the Board now."

"Merlin, of course it was because of your grades, Hermione! You are, unfortunately for me, the top student. You always beat me!" Draco said, and then he turned back to Severus. "I can't go to Durmstrang. I'm going to Gringotts with Harry this morning."

"I'll go with him. You need to get this done so that Tom is able to attend Hogwarts. If you wait it will be too late to enroll him."

"Why do I have to go?"

"Because it was your idea to have the Dark Lord go to Hogwarts with you and I'll not have Hermione going with Tom by herself. Stop whining like a petulant child," Severus returned with a sneer.

"All right, fine." Draco turned around and slammed into the bathroom.

"What's wrong with him?" Hermione asked. Severus shook his head and took her hand in his before pulling her out of the room.

"Who knows… you all thrive on dramatics. It'll drive me into the grave one day."

"Now whose being dramatic, Severus?" she asked before laughing at his astonished look. "Let's go have some breakfast."

Tom joined the two for breakfast out on one of the verandas outside the second story dining room. Hermione has insisted they eat there as it was a very lovely day.

"Your cheerfulness is a bit much, Hermione. You're going to end up giving me a headache," Tom declared after Hermione had taken a breath in between her words as she'd been talking non-stop to him and Severus throughout breakfast.

"Then put earplugs in your ears. I won't have you turning my mood sour."
Tom raised an eyebrow and looked at Severus inquiringly. "She's been made Head Girl."

"Severus, who is Head Boy this year?" Hermione asked.

"Who do you think it is? Which male has had the top marks since year one?"

They watched as Hermione's brows furrowed in thought. Severus and Tom obtained a chill when her face went dark with feral glee and she began to laugh almost hysterically, more like cackling, but the men weren't paying attention to that. It was the look of pure malicious delight in her eyes.

"Oh, this is good. So good." Hermione began to rub her hands together. "Draco and I will have free reign of the school! We could get away with anything!" She sat back and giggled. "This is simply wonderful. I can't wait for school to start."

"Please don't make my job as a teacher worse than it already will be," Severus implored. Tom grinned when she waved his plead away.

"Really Severus, you need more excitement in your life." Severus scowled and she answered with a cheeky grin. Hermione looked down at the floor when something brushed her ankle and she smiled upon seeing Harry's snake. Immediately Hermione lowered her arm and allowed Lovely to slither on and up to her shoulder. "Hello, Lovely." The snake answered with a soft hiss.

"She returns your greeting," Tom said, surprised to see Hermione so at ease with a dangerous snake circling her neck. "She can understand some human words." He looked over at Severus to find the wizard nearly drooling from the picture Hermione made with a snake. Tom couldn't resist the snort that escaped him.

Harry and Draco arrived soon after, both surprised to see the snake resting peacefully around Hermione's neck. Harry looked impressed while Draco looked a bit green. They both sat down, their chairs closer than needed and Draco rested his arm over the back of Harry's chair.

"Is there a reason why you're sitting so close to each other?" Severus inquired.

"Do we ever need a reason?" Harry asked. His mood lightened since he and Draco had a little talk about their insecurities. He'd been astonished that Draco had been upset that he couldn't accompany him to Gringotts, and was happy to know that his own feelings of wanting Draco with him at all times was reciprocated. Then Draco had sneered and told him these Hufflepuff moments would be few and far between. Harry had merely smiled dazedly, as at that time Draco had had him bent over the bathroom counter.

"Look, at least my hands are above the table," Draco drawled.

Harry started laughing, remembering the previous night with Sirius and Lucius at the table. He didn't think Draco had heard about that incident, which made his comment seem more hilarious. And then Lucius and Sirius made their entrance and Harry started to laugh harder, and only Severus knew why he was laughing like an idiot. The table was enlarged to allow room for the two latecomers and everyone was quiet until breakfast was finished and the house elves had cleared the table.

"What is on the agenda for today?" Lucius asked.

"Harry and I will be traveling to Gringotts, while Tom, Hermione, and Draco have an appointment with that idiot Karkaroff this morning."

Tom frowned at hearing the name. "Have I not killed him yet?" he looked at Lucius and Severus, both who shook their heads. "I'm sure I had planned to kill him."
"He snitched on other Death Eaters to keep from getting thrown in Azkaban, didn't he?" Hermione asked. Tom, Lucius, and Severus nodded. "Well he's better off where he is, for now," she said. "We can control Durmstrang through him now. Yes, you'll allow him to continue to live, won't you, Tom?"

"The tone in your voice tells me I have no other choice." The smile on Hermione's face confirmed to everyone that he had hit the mark. "Some Dark Lord I am..." he muttered darkly.

"What are you two going to do?" Harry asked his godfather and soon to be father-in-law.

"A visit to Remus for me. Moony's been cooped up deep within the Order headquarters for the past week. He may have information on what Dumbledore is planning. The old bastard has been too quiet. It's like he just gave up on you two. But I don't believe that for a minute."

"Dumbledore still has some time before school starts," Harry agreed. "Say hello to Moony for me. I miss him."

"Will do, pup."

"And I still have businesses to run," Lucius replied.

"And Ministry workers to Imperio," Tom added under his breath. Lucius' nod was imperceptible.

"Harry, has anyone told you what happened last night?" Hermione asked, and then before anyone could answer, she went on at full speed. "It was so exciting! Well not the part about you being in pain and passing out, but the part where the Ukatae healer arrived to help you and-"

"She looked like a soldier too," Sirius spoke up. He frowned when Lucius and Severus looked at him in surprise. "What? I can be observant too when I want. I'm not a complete moron!"

Severus snorted while Lucius rubbed his arm soothingly.

"She calmed Draco down and then she cut your wings out..." Hermione then went on to describe everything in detail.

"Where did she come from?" Harry asked.

"She wouldn't say, and she disappeared as suddenly as she appeared," Lucius replied.

"I think they've been watching us. How else would she have known Harry needed help?"

"That seems reasonable. They're probably not that far away, even now." Tom was disappointed he hadn't been there. "Next time something happens to either of you, I would like to be notified," he said softly, but when Hermione looked at him, his anger was evident in his dark eyes. Harry and Draco looked surprised, the other wizards looked indifferent, but Hermione was watching him with understanding.

"We're sorry, Tom. Everything happened so fast..."

"Tom... you love us now, don't you?" Harry said in a singsong voice and batted his lashes at the Dark wizard. Tom scowled which only made the two Ukatae smile widely.

"After we leave Durmstrang, I'll be going to the Ministry for my Apparition license, then I'll probably go home. My parents must be worried since they saw me come home, but not leave again." Here she glared at Harry and Draco. Harry coughed into his hand, and one finger discreetly pointed
"After you've spoken to your parents you will come back here," Severus stated.

"An order, Severus?" she asked lowly.

Harry and Draco quickly pushed their chairs back from the table and looked back and forth between Severus and Hermione. There was a moment of silence where everyone was afraid to move.

"I have made lunch reservations."

"A date?" she asked hopefully, and when Severus nodded, Hermione smiled brightly. Everyone released the breath they had all been holding.

"Really, you never know what's going to happen with those two," Sirius said to Lucius when everyone stood to get on with their day.

Harry and Severus arrived outside of Gringotts at the Apparition point and made their way inside, past the large bronze doors and through the main hall where a hundred or so goblins sat behind counters, all keeping to themselves and working diligently on something or other. The two ignored everything and everyone and strode up the main counter and Harry cleared his throat to get the goblin's attention. The short creature stood on his stool and leaned over the counter. He looked surprised when looking upon Harry. The goblins, just like wizards, hadn't seen a Ukatae in many generations which would explain why the creature looked surprised to see him.

"Yes?" the goblin looked at Harry with more than a little suspicion and much wariness… which was a first that Harry had ever seen.

"Harry Potter. Here about my inheritance. I have an appointment."

The suspicious look vanished to be replaced with open curiosity. "Ah, yes. Mr. Potter. We've been expecting you." The small goblin snapped his fingers and another goblin quickly came running.

"Ragnok will show you the way to Bogrod who will be reading the will if you wish and passing over to you the contents of the inheritance."

Harry nodded. "Thank you."

He and Severus were led through one of the many doors lining the walls of the main hall, then through a number of corridors within the bank, which explained to Harry why they needed an escort. The hallways were just as intricate as the passageways to the vaults. Nothing but a maze.

"Here you are. Bogrod is expecting you, Mr. Potter."

"Thank you, Ragnok." The goblin nodded then hurried away to whatever business he was attending before being called.

Severus and Harry entered a medium sized and unimpressive room. The room was square and carved from stone, and very chilly. There weren't even any windows. Bogrod the goblin sat behind the desk at one end of the room, and in front of the desk were two rows of chairs with three chairs making up each row. Harry took the seat at the front of one row, Severus did the same in the other and they looked at the goblin that had yet to look up at them from where he was hunched over scribbling furiously upon a long parchment.

"Excuse me," Severus finally spoke, a sneer in his voice. "But we do have other places to be." Since
Harry wasn't happy with being ignored either, he didn't say anything about his uncle's rude tone and watched the old goblin with a blank cold mask.

"Mr. Potter?" the goblin spoke without looking up.

"Yes," Harry answered flatly. Bogrod looked up then and raised a very bushy brow.

"And a Ukatae too. How extraordinary."

"Can we get on with it?" Severus snapped.

The goblin set his quill aside and started to fan the parchment. "And you are?"

"Severus Snape. Guardian of Harry Potter and brother to Lily Potter."

"Then you have a right to be here."

Severus gritted his teeth against the annoyance. Finally the goblin began to roll up the parchment and didn't speak until he'd finished and put it away in the desk. This only further irritated Severus and Harry as the parchment was very long and took a couple of minutes to roll up, especially since Bogrod was old and his every movement seemed to take decades. Harry hissed with impatience.

Would Master like me to bite the goblin? Lovely asked eagerly from her regular position around his neck after feeling her Master's displeasure. Harry took a moment to consider it as he slowly stroked her scales. When Bogrod looked up again he was startled to be faced with an irate looking Ukatae who was baring his fangs at him and whose face was clouded in dark shadows. Bogrod was no idiot and knew all too well about the power and dangers of the dark being before him.

"Yes..." he cleared his throat and hurriedly rummaged for the correct parchments stored in one of the drawers of his desk. "Your inheritance." He pulled the sealed parchments out and placed them on the edge of the desk closest to the two visitors.

"Hold out your hand please." Bogrod stood from his chair and shuffled around to stand before Harry. When Harry held out a hand the goblin grasped it firmly and quickly pressed a pin into his index finger until a drop of blood appeared.

"Please allow a couple drops of your blood on the sealed documents."

"A warning would have been nice," Harry muttered as he moved forward to the desk. He did as the goblin said and let the droplets of blood fall onto the yellowish parchment and then watched as the blood was absorbed. As soon as the last bit of it disappeared the parchment unsealed itself with a white glow. Harry spent a moment sucking on his pricked finger before pinning the goblin with a sharp look. "You need blood of the family in order to see the will?"

"Yes."

"Then explain how Albus Dumbledore was able to see the will directly after my parents' deaths."

"Mr. Potter, you are the first person this will has unsealed itself for," Bogrod said as he made himself comfortable in his chair once again. He stared steadily back at the irate Ukatae. "Apparently your parents did not trust anyone with it and therefore made sure only you would be able to open it upon the correct time, which would be when you reached your majority."

Harry looked at Severus and the Potions Master looked thoughtful. "We have been led by Dumbledore under many and various lies. When he told us about reading the will that must have
been another of his fabrications."

Harry's fists clenched. "Another fucking lie…" He closed his eyes and pushed the anger away. "Why did it take you this long to contact me about the will and my inheritance? Shouldn't I have been sent a notice the day after my birthday?"

"Yes, but I'm afraid the paperwork was in disarray."

"So you say." Harry snatched the folder of parchment off the desk and sat back down before he pulled out the documents.

"We do apologize for the delay in-" Bogrod's words were cut off when Harry lifted a hand, his eyes never leaving the parchment as he read over it.

Harry didn't spend a great deal of time looking over everything. He wanted to do that in the privacy of his own home. If he had any questions, he could always return, and the more time he passed within that room, the more his nerves were being plucked the wrong way. "Is there anything specific you need to tell me about the inheritance?"

"It's all there within the documents."

"Good. I will look over this at home. But right now I want to see the…" Harry looked back at the parchment and his eyes widened. "Um…Er…" Severus looked over and Harry pointed.

"The Potter's four vaults."

"Is this right? Four?" Harry coughed, clutching the parchment with shaking hands.

"The Potter family has always been wealthy, Harry. You were told this," Severus said. "James Potter- spoiled rich arrogant bastard… did you think I only said that just to say it?"

"I've never really thought about it…"

"Actually you have five vaults now," Bogrod announced, scanning the sheet in front of him. He rummaged through another drawer and presented four new shiny vault keys for Harry to take. Only four because Harry already had one key. The one he received when he was introduced to the Wizarding world.

"How do I have five now? I haven't been saving money."

"This says it's from interest over the years, but most of the fifth vault is from a Sirius Black, who has passed on a substantial amount of money over to you. This was done just recently. According to these documents he has listed you as family and as such Mr. Black is allowed to deposit money into your vaults, but only deposit, he can't withdraw."

"Send it back! I don't need more money!"

"There is a note here from Mr. Black." The goblin lifted a small piece of parchment and Harry snatched it up, and then he started to growl. The parchment read as follows: No give backs, Harry! Ha ha!

"That bastard! And he made it to where I can't even give it back. I'll fix him when I get home."

Harry seethed as they left Gringotts after a long visit to each and every vault. Each vault had nearly been full to the brim which seemed to displease Harry, leaving much confusion on Severus' part.
One vault held only the Potter portraits and treasures, and that was the vault Harry spent most of the
time looking through.

"I don't understand how having so much money can make you so angry, Harry."

Harry sighed and ran his hand through his hair, making several witches who had been watching him
sigh and nearly drool on themselves. Severus rolled his eyes at them. Apparently young witches
liked the gorgeous, brooding looks of dark beings. "I'm just not used to all that money, Uncle Sev. I
really don't need it. I'd rather just give it... away." Harry brightened and bolted back to the bank.
Severus sighed and followed, but he remained just outside and rested against one of the white pillars.
After a time Harry returned with a huge grin across his face.

"What did you do?" Severus was sure he wasn't going to like what he heard.

"Do you think Hermione would get mad if she suddenly found herself a wealthy witch?" Harry
asked impishly.

"She'll be furious," Severus groaned. "And I'll be the recipient when she decides to rant about it.
Thanks very much."

"You're welcome. I also gave some to Ginny, Fred, and George. I was going to give it to the entire
Weasley family, but they would never take it. But I know Ginny will keep it, enjoy it, and find some
way to share it with her family. Same with the twins."

"Yes. A good move on your part. Arthur and Molly would probably never forgive you if you gave it
to them out right."

Harry nodded in agreement. "How do you think Draco and the others are doing at Durmstrang?"

Severus snorted before answering. "Karkaroff is no idiot and he'll recognize Tom. No doubt certain
people have already told him about the changes the Dark Lord has made to himself. Karkaroff will
probably piss his pants the moment Tom enters the office and he'll do anything they tell him to
because he knows he should have been dead by now."

Igor Karkaroff didn't urinate on himself when he saw whom he was meeting in his office, but it was
a close call. As it was he nearly fainted and the blood drained from his face when the Dark Lord
entered closely followed by Draco Malfoy and Hermione Granger. Igor had been made aware of the
Dark Lord's return and about the way he dealt with those who wanted to leave his organization the
night he'd come back with the new, younger body. And now, looking upon the sneering face of the
young Dark Lord, Igor was sure he was about to die. Still, he managed to stand from his chair,
stumble around his desk and kneel at the Dark Lord's feet.

"You are not groveling enough!" Voldemort spat. "Crucio!"

Tom watched the man writhe and scream in pain with a twisted smile on his face. Draco smirked and
Hermione was watching both Karkaroff and Tom with nothing short of fascination. But after three
minutes and Tom looking like he could go on with it forever, she felt it was her duty to put a stop to
it. Karkaroff would be no good to them if he were so affected that he couldn't hear. Hermione shifted
and discreetly touched Tom's elbow. He started and looked at her and she nodded towards the
Durmstrang headmaster. Tom received her unspoken message and reluctantly released the curse.
Draco huffed his displeasure and Hermione shot him a look that clearly told him to behave. She had
noticed how much more sadistic the blond had become since his and Harry's transformations.

"Karkaroff," Tom began and then his eyes went wide with unyielding anger when the wizard
interrupted him.

"My lord, please… I meant to come to you, I swear it! Please let me live… I'll do any-" 

Hermione surprised herself and her companions when she reacted before the Dark Lord could. "Crucio!" she yelled, her eyes bright with righteous anger. Her friends turned to look at her with awe, but she ignored them. "How dare you interrupt Lord Voldemort!" She had to raise her voice over the noises Karkaroff was making under her curse. "When he speaks you will listen. You will listen and keep your treacherous mouth shut! Is this understood? Speak!"

"I… I understand!"

Hermione lifted the curse and watched, unaffected, as Karkaroff continued to twitch in pain. "I'm glad we have that understood," she said cheerfully and pocketed her wand.

"Severus is so going to see this through the Pensieve," Draco promised in a quiet voice. She sniffed and raised her nose in the air. Though she looked calm, she had to work very hard from trembling. That had been extremely thrilling. Too thrilling, actually. She'd enjoyed it way too much. Tom looked at her and flashed a smile. His eyes told her he knew exactly what she was thinking.

"As my associate was so kind to point out, you will listen Karkaroff and do as you are told. The only reason why I did not kill you the moment we stepped into this office is because my dear Hermione said you could still be useful to us. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, m-my lord," Karkaroff stuttered, his eyes shifting to Hermione for a split second before returning to the ground at Voldemort's feet.

"Wonderful." Tom moved, leaving Karkaroff lying on the floor. He rounded the desk and took up the Headmaster's chair. Hermione followed after and stood beside him. Draco, with a sneer still plastered on his face, bent down and grabbed Karkaroff by the throat with one hand and lifted the wizard up until they were eye to eye. He drew back his lips and bared his fangs.

"You aren't nearly as terrified as you should be," he growled lowly and was pleased with the whimpering response he received. Draco raised the wizard a bit higher before throwing him across the office to slam into one of the chairs facing the desk.

"Oh, wonderful Draco! He's unconscious now!" Hermione chided.

"He's not unconscious." Draco strode forward and kicked Karkaroff over onto his back. "He's only pretending. Aren't you, you piece of trash?" he bent down and picked Karkaroff up and then planted him in the unbroken chair.

"I'll kill you if you don't open your eyes in the next second," Tom said calmly. Karkaroff's eyes immediately opened and Draco snorted.

"See? I told you Hermione." Draco hit the back of Karkaroff's head before moving to stand on the other side of Tom.

"Are you quite finished with your violence, Draco?" Hermione asked.

"Yes, thanks. And don't be hypocritical."

"Igor," Tom began, "I need to be a transfer from Durmstrang so that I may enter Hogwarts in September." Karkaroff's eyes widened but he was smart enough to keep his mouth shut this time. "I need the paperwork done and sent off to Hogwarts today. Right now. Is that understood?"
"Yes, Master."

"The name of the transfer student is Luther Bailey and he has been staying over with the Malfoy's for the summer since finding out he would have to transfer for his seventh year. The paperwork will be done properly, leaving no room for suspicion when the Hogwarts staff read it." Tom leaned forward and brought his fingers together in a steeple. When he smiled coldly, Karkaroff cringed. "If I do not receive my Hogwarts letter within two days, I will have no choice but to believe you are useless and your life will be forfeited."

Tom nodded to himself and stood. He began to leave and Karkaroff rushed to grovel at the hem of Tom's robes again. Tom stared at the back of his head for a moment. "Hermione, would you mind terribly reminding Karkaroff of why he shouldn't divulge any information about our visit or anything to do with us?"

"Not at all, Tom. Leave it to me." Hermione turned and pointed her wand at the cowering wizard. "You should be happy to feel the pain, Karkaroff. It means you are still alive… Crucio."

"Hermione," started Draco, "not that I didn't enjoy watching you curse Karkaroff, but just promise me you aren't going to turn into another Bellatrix."

"Of course not!" Hermione sounded scandalized as they walked away from the cold castle of Durmstrang back to where they could Apparate outside of the wards. "Bellatrix is a crazy bitch, and I will certainly not go around cursing innocent people! Karkaroff deserved it. We can't have him thinking he's his own master and we can't have him going around talking as he has done before."

"This is true," Tom said with a firm nod.

"Would one of you mind dropping me off at the Ministry please?"

Both Tom and Draco ended up going with her and insisted on waiting. But she denied them, saying, "honestly, you two, I'll be fine. We're in the middle of London… muggles everywhere. Nothing will happen to me and I'll be going straight home afterwards. Draco, why don't you take Tom shopping at the muggle shops you brought Harry to? He's in need of a fashion overhaul," she ended as they stopped just outside of the phone booth.

"Excuse me?" Tom looked appalled. "Did you forget I am Lord Voldemort?" he whispered furiously. "You want to dress me in what?"

"Excellent idea, Hermione!" The blond grinned excitedly, ignoring Tom's horrified expression. "It certainly is not!"

Hermione simply smiled at Tom, pat his stiff shoulder, and then entered the phone booth.

"I need to go and exchange money at Gringotts. C'mon. You can wait for me at the Weasley's shop."

Tom could only sputter as Draco grabbed his arm and Apparated them straight into Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes.

"Blimey, Draco! You nearly crushed a customer!" Fred yelled from the counter after seeing the two of them Apparate near the door, though luckily they were far enough in that they wouldn't be hit by the door prank. If they had arrived a second before they would have landed on a man just leaving the store.
"Don't you know it's rude to Apparate straight into a place?" George said upon coming out from the back room. His tone was chiding, but he was grinning.

"Is it alright if Tom stays here for a few minutes while I run to Gringotts?"

"Absolutely!"

"Our pleasure, mate!"

Draco nodded and hightailed it out of there before Tom could say or do anything leaving the Dark Lord standing there in a joke shop, looking furious. It was understandable why Fred and George kept their distance.

"Show me around your store," Tom finally demanded and the twins jumped to obey.

Tom was shown products such as the Wildfire Whiz Bangs, Ton-Tongue Toffees, and their bestsellers the Skiving Snackboxes. Understandably again, Fred and George didn't take Tom anywhere near the Canary Creams. Halfway through the store, Ron finally came out from the back, followed closely by Seamus Finnigan. When Fred saw this he turned livid.

"We've already told you not to bring your friends into the back, Ron! What the hell?"

"What're you getting worked up about? It's only Seamus-"

"Listen Ron," George placed a heavy on his brother's shoulder. "You and your boyfriend can hang around out here. But keep out of the back. Got it?"

Ron turned a violent shade of red. "What are you on about? We're only-"

"Yeah, whatever." George turned back to Tom, who had been watching everything with interest. He found watching the brothers amusing until Ron spoke again.

"You let that thing back there all the time. Why can Harry go back there and my friends can't?"

"What did you call him?" Tom asked in false civility as he stepped forward, finally bringing the notice of the two younger Gryffindors. "A thing? Is that what you called Harry?"

Fred and George shared a look of concern for their brother, as they knew how the Dark Lord felt about Harry. Ron was oblivious to all this but Seamus was smarter and he noticed the gleam in the newcomer's eye.

"Who are you?"

"He's Luther," Fred said warily

"A friend," George put in

"Of Potter?" Ron sneered. "You should steer clear of him. Bad news all around. Him, Malfoy, and that bitch!"

"And who would you be calling a bitch?" behind him, Tom heard the twins groan.

"Hermione Granger," Seamus answered with malice. "She's nothing but a power hungry slut."

Tom raised his wand before the two idiots could blink and sent them flying across the store. He stalked after them and bent down and watched them try to regain their breath and senses.
"If you ever say anything like that again about Harry, Draco, or Hermione… I will kill you." Tom's hand tightened on his wand and Ron and Seamus trembled against each other when they realized this was a dangerous wizard. For his part, Tom was trying to restrain himself from casting an Unforgivable on them. As if sensing his thoughts the twins ran forward and grabbed the two younger wizards off the floor and hauled them to the door.

"What the hell? You're my brothers! Are you going to let him get away with that?"

"It's because we're your brothers and we love you that we're doing this!" Fred and George threw Seamus and Ron out of the store and then locked the door. Tom took out a bag of Galleons and threw it on the counter before crossing his arms and leaning against it.

"For your trouble," he said simply. And then he sneered. "Your brother is a problem I might have to deal with at Hogwarts."

"Just don't maim or kill him. That's all we ask."

"Fine. I will refrain from taking his life… What about the other one?" he asked hopefully.

"Finnigan? Don't much care about him."

Tom would have responded but Draco popped in just then and grinned at all of them. "I saw Weasel and the leprechaun outside. What did you do to them?" he asked Tom eagerly.

"Not as much as I wanted. Due to my recent growing relationship with the Weasleys, I feel doing as I please with Ronald Weasley would not be in my best interests. Finnigan however is another matter. He should be told to watch his back or someone might look up to find the Dark Mark looming over his cold body."

Draco's eyebrows rose past his hairline and he looked at the twins, who looked like they wanted to keep silent, which they did. They were no fools.

"Weasley called Harry a thing. And he called Hermione a bitch and Finnigan referred to her as a power hungry slut," Tom supplied helpfully or unhelpfully in the twins' opinion. Tom knew well the consequences of telling Draco what had been said.

Draco's amusement abruptly disappeared. "Excuse me," he growled and popped away again.

"Oh shit!" Fred cried and ran for the door.

"Holy buggering hell! They're dead!" George grabbed Tom's arm and started pulling him after his brother. "Can't believe you told him!"

"You should just be happy Severus is not here."

"But Draco is going to kill Ron so it doesn't really matter if Severus is here or not. Draco would love to see Ron six feet under!" George said frantically.

"He won't do that. He likes your mum. But I can't promise that he won't maim him. He is a Ukatae after all. Vicious creatures when they get the urge." Tom said all this in a light unconcerned tone as they ran through Diagon Alley searching for a blood thirsty Ukatae on the warpath.

"Found them!" Fred yelled after several minutes of frantic looking; only on the twins' part of course. Tom was just going along for the fun of it and was looking forward to seeing the damage Draco would inflict.
They found Draco doing exactly what they thought he would be doing. Beating the life out of Ron and Seamus. Seamus was already unconscious and bleeding and Ron was lying beside him trying to get the furious blond off him. He was screaming like a little girl, but honestly anyone would be when they had what seemed like a monster over them beating them to death with fists of steel. Tom thought it was fortunate for Finnigan and Weasley that Draco had decided to use the hands on approach instead of his magic; otherwise the boys would have been dead after the first blast of magic used.

"I suggest stunning him before he realizes we're here," Tom said when they entered the alleyway. "Otherwise he'll probably turn on you in this state."

"Stupefy!" Two resounding voices echoed through the alley, and Draco half turned to stare menacingly at Fred and George. They lifted their shaking wands to repeat the curse, completely flummoxed that two stupefies had not worked.

"Wait," Tom said. Draco staggered towards them, making Fred and George scurry to shield themselves behind the Dark Lord. But the next moment Draco pitched forward unconscious. Fred and George sighed in relief.

"You should check on your brother and his friend. Perhaps a trip to St. Mungo's will be in order. I'll take care of Draco."

"Thanks," Fred and George murmured dryly and they Apparated away with the bruised and bloody bodies of Seamus and Ron.

"My my my, this one is unusually violent, don't you think?"

"Don't talk to me, Ozemir."

Brumek and Ozemir were paired together to follow the one called Draco wherever he went, and were now standing across the road from the alleyway, watching the wizard walk towards the unconscious *Ukatae*. Brumek swore upon all the stars in the sky that he would get back at Falde for pairing him up with the much too delicate *Ukatae* Scholar. What could the Scholar do if real trouble were to suddenly appear? Stand there and recite a passage from one of his boring scriptures? In other words, not a whole lot!

Ozemir went on, ignoring the annoyed waves coming from his partner. "He did this because of malicious words. Imagine the kind of destruction this Draco will do if his mate is dishonored physically in any way!"

"Will you shut up!" Brumek snapped, his patience and training nearly failing him.

As it was, his raised voice carried and was heard by the wizard who immediately looked over to where Brumek and Ozemir were lounging near the door of a store. Ozemir jerked away from the wizard's gaze and started whistling while Brumek stared steadily back.

"You are not being inconspicuous," Brumek hissed to the idiot beside him. "The wizard already suspects, and stop that whistling. It's only drawing more attention to us."

"I guess it doesn't matter." Ozemir chuckled, more than used to Brumek's constant surly mood. "We've changed our appearance and dampened our auras. He couldn't possibly know what we are."

"Still." Brumek turned away from the wizard's gaze in a lazy manner and grabbed Ozemir's arm to drag him down the street. "Why in the name of Hirsha did you make yourself look like this?" he asked suddenly. "You look disgusting!"
Ozemir's long pearly white hair was now a short rusty color with strands of gray brushed throughout, and his thin graceful frame with the flawless beautiful features most of their kind had was gone to be replaced by pounds of human fat. Brumek would never admit it, not even under pain of death, but Ozemir's real form was much more attractive than the fat wizard Ozemir turned himself into for this annoying duty of theirs. At least Brumek had kept his basic body form. He had only shortened his height and made his hair red instead of his natural color of black with reddish brown streaks through it. Also disguising the elf ears and sharp fangs. But at least he knew he was still pleasing to look at.

Ozemir looked startled for a moment after his statement, but then he smiled the goofy smile he always seemed to have on his face. The very smile that always made Brumek want to strangle him. But Brumek restrained that impulse and only rolled his eyes. They stopped at an outside vendor and pretended to look at the wares, keeping an eye and their senses on the Ukatae and wizard down the road. It seemed the wizard was more worried about his friend than he was the suspicious looking wizards down the road, and they watched as he revived the young Ukatae. Draco looked back to where he'd last seen the two wizards he'd been beating and pouted when they weren't there. But in a drastic change of attitude, the blond grinned and announced it was time for shopping, which led the wizard with him to groan.

Ozemir bounced on his toes. "I like this Draco!"

"Let's go, and stay quiet," Brumek hissed and they began to follow once again.

Hermione was practically skipping out of the Ministry in a happy stupor, having passed the Apparition test without a problem. It hadn't taken much time at all. She was in such a state that she let her guard down and did not notice the approach of the two men as they followed her from the Ministry and into the alleyway where most witches and wizards went to Apparate to and from the Ministry. Just as she was preparing to Apparate to a secluded spot near her home, someone came up behind her and pressed a dagger against her throat, making it impossible for her to Apparate anywhere. The knife was pressed firmly against her neck so that if she tried Apparating, there was a good chance she'd be badly cut while doing so.

"Do you have any idea what you're getting yourself into by attacking me?" she asked coldly, masking the terror she felt rising up in her like a tidal wave. Another man came to stand in front of her and relieved her of the wand she'd been reaching for. Hermione couldn't see his face due to the hood he was hiding under, but she could tell it was a man.

"Petrificus Totalus," the man in front muttered and Hermione was cast immobile. She was somewhat relieved because the man behind her removed the knife from her throat. Hermione could have lifted the spell nonverbally- "thank you, Tom!"- but she had a feeling this had to do with Dumbledore, and she wanted to find out more about what was going on. Besides, she figured if she were going to be killed, they would have done it already.

"C'mon. We need to get out of here. The old wizard is expecting us," the man with the knife said.

Though I want to know, I also need to get a message to Severus or anyone at Malfoy Manor. But how do I do that? Now she wished they hadn't cast her immobile. With an inward sigh of regret she realized she would just have to wait until she was made more aware of the situation she was now in. She squeezed her eyes shut against the helplessness she was beginning to feel. Even if she could do spells nonverbally, it wouldn't make much of a difference if she were being taken to Dumbledore. She suddenly felt dizzy with fear when she realized if it were Dumbledore, he would simply ask her questions, force out the answers, and then kill her. He wouldn't want her back with Harry or Voldemort to add to their power. There was simply no way Dumbledore would allow her to return to them alive.
"Draco took me shopping. For three hours," Tom muttered hours later.

He, Draco, Harry, and Pansy were in the library of Malfoy Manor. The three Hogwarts students being there to work on their homework assignments. Tom was so tired he felt he could sleep for years and he let his head drop down to the table where he sat with everyone. Never again would he go shopping with Draco. Never!

"I'll put you under unspeakable tortures if you ever try to drag me shopping with you ever again," he hissed at the blond who sat opposite him, next to Harry. Draco's answer was to smirk. Beside him, Pansy pouted.

"I can't believe you went shopping without me, Draco. I could have helped you pick out the Dark Lord's new clothes. A once in a life time experience!"

"Are you honestly still complaining about that?" Tom asked and turned evil eyes on her. "Did you not just hear me threaten great torture? What is wrong with you all?"

"Hey, don't put me in with their lot, Tom. I hate the whole shopping thing as much as you do," Harry said as he scribbled notes down for his Transfiguration essay and swatted Draco's roaming hand away from his thigh. This movement had been going on for the last ten minutes as Draco was not to be ignored and he would not give up either.

"You will begin to love going shopping with me," Draco demanded lazily but Harry just snorted and pushed his hand away again.

"Not very likely."

"Hey, didn't you say Hermione and Professor Snape are going on a date? I wonder how it's going," Pansy mused, though she was really thinking of something else, or more particularly someone else.

"Do you think she got her Apparition license?" Draco asked

"Don't ask stupid questions. Of course she did." Tom lifted his head. "Probably didn't even have to think about it. Hermione probably broke the record of taking and passing the test in the quickest time possible."

"That's true."

Harry paused in his writing, looked up and then around. He narrowed his eyes slightly as he scanned the library. "Do you guys feel something?"

"Like what?"

"I have this feeling… like someone is watching us."
"Is it a bad feeling?" Pansy asked in worry.

"No."

Tom nodded. "I suspect it is others of your kind." He withdrew his wand and started fingering it. "They had better be friendly."

"When do you think they'll come out from hiding since clearly I can sense you?" Harry ended loudly so that his voice could be heard in every part of the library. He wasn't sure, but he could have sworn he heard a muffled giggle from somewhere in the back of the library.

"Do you think they're inside?" Pansy questioned, eyes going wide as she looked around. "How would they get passed the wards?"

"Ukatae," Draco drawled, as if that explained everything.

Harry grinned a sharp predatory grin at the witch and returned to his summer homework. Once again he had to swat Draco's hand away from his lap. He wasn't too much worried about it. The Ukatae would appear when they appeared. It was actually a relief to know they were there. To know that others of their kind had come to them.

"Harry, when do you think Charlie has to go back to his dragons? It never came up?" Pansy suddenly asked, unable to keep it in anymore.

Harry looked up and smiled. "I don't know, but Ginny will be here later. She should know."

"Why's little Weaslette coming? Surely she's with Blaise."

"Oh, she'll probably drag him along too just as soon as she gets the owl from Gringotts…"

Draco would have asked what that was about, but then the library doors slammed open and in swept Severus, impatient anger curling around him like a cloud. Everyone seemed to cringe as he came to stop at the table, as his glare could have frozen even the warmest heart.

"What's up, Uncle Sev?" Harry seemed to be the only one who dared to bring that furious glare focused on him, so he was the one to speak. Draco wasn't afraid either, but he just didn't care why Severus was angry; he was more concerned with feeling Harry up under the table. Severus seemed to realize this for in the next moment Draco's head was reeling from being hit upside the head.

"Where is Hermione? We were supposed to leave fifteen minutes ago."

"Haven't seen her since Draco and I dropped her off at the Ministry," Tom replied.

"We thought she was already with you," Harry put in before murmuring soothingly and taking Draco's aching head in his arms, kissing the top of his head. Draco melted into the seat and against his mate's chest, closing his eyes in bliss and wrapping his arms around Harry's middle. "Maybe her parents kept her longer than she expected…" the Gryffindor suggested.

"Go and check."

Harry knew by the twitching of his uncle's eye that Severus was in no mood to be disobeyed. Harry reluctantly released his mate and raised his hands in the air in surrender. "All right, Uncle Sev. Calm down. You're ruining the lightened studying mood." Harry then stood up and Apparated away.

"Could have said goodbye first," Draco mumbled and slammed his book closed. "While we wait I
want to show you something, Severus." He snapped his fingers and a house elf popped in. "Please bring my Pensieve."

Tom perked up and grinned at Severus. "You will appreciate this," he promised his former slave.

Harry Apparated into a vacant lot that was surrounded by high thorn bushes. The lot was only a few houses down from Hermione's for which he was grateful. He didn't feel like taking a long walk. He stood still a moment, listening intently and scanned the area before tuning into his magic and dousing his Ukatae appearance. Wouldn't do to let muggles see his ears and fangs the way they really were. And he also transfigured his robes into a pair of loose jeans and a black t-shirt. Draco helped him put a shield charm over the wing sacks that morning so that no matter how tight his top would be, no one would look at his back and be able to see anything out of the ordinary. They would just see his broad shoulders and toned back against the fabric. And the best part was that Harry couldn't feel the wing sacks. He was very happy about that. He knew he'd feel very self conscious if he felt them.

Harry casually walked out of the empty lot with his hands tucked deep down into his pockets. His walking stance was relaxed, but he was anything but. He had the strangest feeling that he was being watched and followed. Again. He only hoped Tom was correct and that it was Ukatae instead of someone from the Order. Someone under Dumbledore's orders. Still, being under surveillance was nerve wracking.

"I should have just Apparated directly into her house." He immediately shook his head after saying that. This wasn't an emergency so there was no need to Apparate directly inside. It would have been rude as well and it was a sure thing that Hermione would have blasted him for doing such a thing.

He quickly arrived at the Granger home and he scanned the street one last time before knocking on the door. The door was answered almost immediately and Mr. Granger welcomed him inside immediately after having recognized him.

Across the street Falde and Talyn watched all this from the shadows. "He really does sense us," Talyn said and Falde nodded. "Brumek said Draco couldn't sense them when they were following him."

"That's probably because Draco wasn't as concerned about his surroundings and was too busy wanting to kill those two young wizards. He has a very violent streak in him," Falde murmured. "Though I suppose as Ukatae we all have violent tendencies..."

Talyn laughed. "Yes. I was about to say that you have no room to speak. I've seen the carnage you've laid out before, Falde." They swiftly crossed the street and followed Harry into the house.

Hermione's parents happily greeted Harry as he had been to the Granger house on several occasions. He smiled shyly when Mr. Granger shook his hand, and Mrs. Granger came in from the living room into the small entrance hall to give him a hug.

"Harry. It's nice to see you again. What brings you here?"

"I'm actually looking for Hermione. Is she here?"

The Grangers shared a concerned look that immediately put Harry on edge, and the feeling that someone was watching him intensified. Only... This doesn't feel like anyone I've met before. I don't think it's the Order.

Falde and Talyn backed into the kitchen to get out of sight. "He knows we're here."
"When you helped with his wings, they must have realized we're watching them..." Falde sighed, his teal eyes flickering with indecision. "We were told not to commune with them yet. That is the Council's wish... not that I much like following the Council's orders."

"So, we'll just stay hidden."

"And if they come to us? This one... he seems to have a very curious nature."

"I think he's a cute young one! Falde, I've never known you to be unsure about anything..." Talyn practically purred. She was happy to be able to see a side of Falde that wasn't the stoic soldier persona.

"The circumstances are different with these two. Usually when a new Ukatae is found they are brought to the Council immediately. But since these two are important to the wizarding community we've only been asked to watch and protect them. The Council doesn't want them in the realm right now."

"But why? That doesn't make any sense, Falde."

Falde didn't answer that and instead went back to listening.

"Wait... So Hermione hasn't been back since last night?"

"She came back from dinner and we thought she would stay the night," Mrs. Granger said. "But someone came to get her. We heard that sound that's made when you appear and disappear. Do you think she was kidnapped?" she asked with wide eyes that greatly resembled her daughter's eyes.

"Oh...ah...no, she wasn't kidnapped last night. Not really." Harry smiled sheepishly and rubbed the back of his neck. How does one tell parents that their daughter was taken to meet her lover? You just don't! "That was my boyfriend, Draco. We needed Hermione for a meeting. I apologize that it was so late and that we didn't notify you."

"No worries, Harry. As long as she was with you and.... Did you say your boyfriend?" Mr. Granger asked and Harry nodded slowly. "Over the last six years I've heard Hermione complain about a boy named Draco, and about all the things he's done to you... Is this the same person?"

"Yeah, but he's not the same anymore," he hurried to explain. "He only acted like a git because he thought he had to." Harry shifted on his feet; a little surprised that the Grangers took him being gay so lightly... But then he thought of course they weren't surprised. Hermione often told her parents many things and they were just as open minded as their daughter. "Anyway, she went to her appointment at the Ministry of Magic but she never arrived for lunch afterwards, so I was just looking to see if she came here to see you two first."

"Like I said, she hasn't been here since last night," Mr. Granger said.

"Okay. I'll be sure to send her home as soon as I see her. She probably just stopped at a bookstore or something."

After that Harry said goodbye as quickly as possible and stepped out of the Granger house, sending soothing thoughts backed to the Grangers. No point in getting them as panicked as he was becoming. There is no way Hermione would have been late or willingly missed her date with Severus. There is no way. "Something must have happened to her." Harry ran back to the vacant lot and Apparated back to Malfoy Manor.
Severus came out of the Pensieve with a blank expression. He clenched his fists at his sides and tried to avoid all the eyes that were staring at him.

"What's up with that look, Professor Snape?" Pansy asked, being the only one who didn't know what he'd just seen. Draco pushed the Pensieve over to her and invited her to take a look, which she happily did.

Severus managed to get himself under control and sat down. "So… Karkaroff wasn't a problem then. As I expected." He remained quiet and still for all of thirty seconds before slamming his fist down on the table and yelling, "where the hell is that witch!"

This of course drew out snickering from Draco and Tom. A few minutes later Pansy came out of the Pensieve and she had a look of shock on her face.

"Wow, I didn't think she had it in her to do that. And she was enjoying it, too." Pansy sat back down and looked at Draco, who was grinning.

"Yeah. Hermione will pretend otherwise, but you could see it in her eyes."

Severus stood and began to pace the length of the library with a scowl printed firmly on his face. Where the hell was she? She knew he made reservations, and she was never late. Severus paced around for a few more minutes before deciding to go check the Ministry himself. As he headed for the doors, Harry popped in.

"We need to have a meeting." Harry walked over to the table, and Severus followed. "Draco, can you get your father and Sirius? Severus, you summon Amortia. Pansy, can you find Blaise and Ginny and you three look around Diagon Alley for Hermione. And maybe see if Ginny can find Charlie and ask if he's heard anything strange from the Order. Also ask Charlie for Remus as well. Charlie should know where he is."

Pansy nodded and even though she had a thousand questions, she immediately went to carry out Harry's orders, as did everyone else. When only Harry was left with Tom, he allowed the worry to show on his face.

"Tom, I think something has happened to Hermione. Her parents haven't seen her since last night. And she wouldn't have been late meeting Severus, no matter what. What do you think?"

Tom sat perfectly still and his face was blank of all emotion now except for his eyes. They flickered with a dangerous light. Harry knew that look as he'd seen it on Draco many times. "You are right. She would not have missed her date with Severus. She's worked too hard to get that wizard to open up to her."

"I think we should check around the Ministry."

Tom nodded and stood. "We'll go now then."

**Draco**

*What's going on Harry? What happened to Hermione?*

*I… I think she's been kidnapped. I don't want to jump to conclusions yet, but I think that's what happened. Tom and I are going to the Ministry now. We'll be back soon.*

*What are you going to do at the Ministry?*
Have a look around. Just inform everyone of my suspicions, and ask those in the Order if they have any news.

All right. Be careful.

Aren't I always?

Do you really want me to answer that?

"Let's go." Harry and Tom Apparated to the Apparition point outside of the Ministry. Harry went inside while Tom Disillusioned himself and walked around the nearby muggle streets.

Tom returned after finding no sign of Hermione and found Harry leaning against the wall dejectedly. "She was in and out of the Ministry and I smell her here, just barely. Her scent is mingled with someone unfamiliar. She could have met someone she knew and maybe…"

"No," Tom said darkly. "You know she would have returned to Malfoy Manor, even if she did meet a friend."

Harry nodded. He just didn't want to think that the worst happened. "We won't be able to track her since it's obvious she Apparated away herself or someone took her."

He and Tom walked away down the muggle road. It seemed like failure to return without any kind of knowledge of Hermione's whereabouts.

"Harry… Harry if this was Dumbledore, we don't have any time. He will kill her," Tom suddenly said. He looked afraid. It was the first time Harry had ever seen fear in Tom's eyes. That look only agitated Harry and reminded him that this whole thing was once again his fault.

"I know that! He'll kill her because of me, I know that!" Harry ran his hands through his hair. "How are we going to find her?"

Behind them, somewhere in the shadows, Falde and Talyn were having an argument over whether they should help out or not, because the *Ukatae* could use their powers to track Harry's missing friend, and they knew without a doubt that she was in trouble.

"He doesn't know how to track them like we can, Falde. He hasn't learned yet. We could help!"

"No." Falde was firm on this. He would only follow his orders and do nothing more.

"But you allowed me to help with his wings. That wasn't exactly part of your orders!"

Falde blinked in surprise. It was like she had read through his thoughts, which shouldn't have been possible. Still… "No." he repeated.

"Listen, our orders are to follow and protect, correct? To keep them out of danger. This witch is one of his best friends and Harry will put himself into danger by going after her. We would be protecting him by helping, making it easier for him to find her and retrieve her without putting his life at risk. You have to see the intelligence in this, Falde! We can't stand by and watch. He is too important! I know it even if you refuse to tell us why!"

"I know how important he is."

"Then let's help!"

"Yes, please help us," Harry said softly from where he and Tom were standing. He felt the incredible
shock coming from the _Ukatae_ and smirked. "Oh, and you can come out of the shadow. I can already see you."

"No. Then I'll have to disguise myself as human. I hate doing that," Talyn complained, once again going back to heavily accented English. She nearly choked on her next words when Falde started cursing long and fluently in their language.

"Whoa! Did we piss him off?" Harry looked wide-eyed at Tom, who continued to stare at the shadows with suspicion. Unlike Harry, he couldn't see the _Ukatae_. He could only hear them.

"Well, Falde…" Talyn began.

"That is unneeded information, _shurnaet_!"

Harry knew that word was a curse. He wracked his consciousness and the word dammit popped out at him.

"… is the stealthiest of _Ukatae_, you see, and it is a huge blow to his warrior ego that a baby _Ukatae_ and a human were able to sneak upon him."

"I am not a baby!" Harry cried out in frustration.

"Let us get back to the important matters. Hermione," Tom finally said. "Will you help us or not."

"No," Falde said immediately. Talyn would have argued but one stony look from her commander and she remained silent. There would be no arguing with the leader in front of strangers. That was a rule not to be broken.

Harry glowered before turning to the friend. "C'mon, Tom." Harry Apparated them both back to Malfoy Manor.

"Falde…" Talyn whined. "If we can save his friend, then we should. Besides I liked her. She seems all right for a human. I would not want her to die."

"You don't know this human…" Falde purposefully kept from looking at Talyn's face as he always had a soft spot for her pout.

"We might as well help him, and…" Talyn smiled a truly evil smile and started to caress her long dark blue braid. "If you don't let us help I promise to inform the Council that you sent me in to help with the wings. And even if they see that as necessary involvement, the Council will be very displeased with you for not consulting with them before sending me in. Don't you think? They'd be such a pain for you."

Talyn knew she won when a low growling started deep within Falde's chest, growing so loud that it began to sound like far away thunder. Talyn flipped her braid back over her shoulder and grinned at her leader before disappearing and leaving Falde to reel in his anger before he joined her.

When Harry and Tom returned to the Library they were both seething, unbelieving that the _Ukatae_ refused to help them even though they could. "If they think for a moment that I'll call myself a _Ukatae_ from now on, they have another thing coming!"

Tom remained silent and only nodded. Harry looked around and noted nearly everyone he called in attendance was there, all except for Moony. Lucius and Amortia were standing close to Severus, trying to calm him down and surprisingly so was Sirius. Draco immediately crossed over to them upon seeing their entrance. Harry was just about to complain to Draco about the _Ukatae_ when a
whooshing sound enveloped the room and the female *Ukatae* appeared and smiled brightly at them all.

"Greetings!" She waved at Harry, who rushed over to her with Draco following close behind. Draco held his hand out and when she did the same he bowed over their hands and she followed. "I convinced the Commander helping you would be for the best."

"Thank you so much!" Harry gushed and surprised the *Ukatae* by hugging her before she could move. "I would have hated to put you on my enemy list."

Talyn blinked at him a moment before grinning. "You're a cute little youngling!" And she returned his embrace with equal relish before releasing him and ruffling his hair to the point where he started to growl in annoyance.

"I'm not a damn baby!"

"You are to me."

"Well that's good, otherwise I'd have to kill you for touching him."

Talyn waved Draco's threat away. "Come out Ozemir, Brumek! We are going to help them!"

Immediately another *Ukatae* appeared beside her. He was tall and beautifully feminine. He wore a long white tunic of a shimmering material that fell down just above his knees and tight black pants that looked like leather to Harry. The sides of the tunic were split open and ran up to his slim waist. Unlike the other *Ukatae* who all had swords, and in Talyn's case also a spear, this male *Ukatae* had no weapons on him. Everything about him screamed soft, except for the intelligent spark within his pretty eyes. Those eyes told Harry taking his appearance for granted would be a grave mistake.

"Greetings! I am Ozemir." He bowed formally to everyone and received nods and similar greetings in turn.

Falde returned then and found the rest of his team in the library with the humans and the two young *Ukatae*. His eyes narrowed into deadly slits when he caught sight of Talyn and Ozemir standing for all to see in the middle of the group of humans. Brumek was the only one who seemed to want to stay within his Shadow. Once he caught sight of Falde he left a trail of smoke across the library in which everyone stopped what they were doing to stare as the two shadows, now visible, came together.

"Falde! Please tell me we're not going to show ourselves..."

"It seems Talyn and Ozemir have already done so."

"You said this wasn't part of our mission!"

"Calm yourself, Brumek. We have no choice but to help. We can solve this much quicker than they can, and there is no doubt that their young friend has been taken. According to what I've heard so far, if this witch has been taken by the person they think, then her life will be taken."

"How is this our concern?"

"Our young ones will put themselves into grave danger. We can prevent this." Falde sighed in displeasure.

"The Council is going to be very displeased," Brumek hissed.
Falde nodded and continued to glare at Talyn and Ozemir who looked entirely too happy being surrounded by the humans. Talyn was preening under the very appreciative stares she was getting from the males, and Ozemir looked like he was in a wonderland, his eyes roaming over all the books around him. His fingers were actually twitching, wanting to grab hold on some of the human books.

Harry pulled Draco away from everyone. "Remus couldn't be found?"

"No. No one knows where he is at the moment… no, it's okay." Draco pulled him into a soothing embrace. "Sirius said Remus has gone underground with the werewolves somewhere. I think Dumbledore wanted to make sure the werewolves go over to his side." The blond snorted. "Too bad for him that they've already pledged themselves to Tom. Why are they here?" he pointed to the female Ukatae and the one with the long white hair who was smiling happily at everyone.

"Tom and I discovered the two that were following me and I asked for their help. The leader originally said no, but I guess he changed his mind." Harry shrugged. He didn't really care why Falde changed his mind, just that he did. Suddenly there was a loud bang as Severus threw a very large book across the room and it hit a table. Everyone turned to see him seething.

"This isn't a fucking social gathering! Hermione is in danger and we need to find her now!"

Harry grabbed Draco's hand and they walked over to him. "We'll find her in time, Uncle Sev. I promise." Harry put a hand on the man's arm and was surprised to find Severus was shaking. Probably both from worry and anger.

"We need to decide who is going," Draco said. He looked at Harry and opened his mouth to say something more.

"Don't even think about it. I am not going to stay here. You must have lost your mind if that's what you think." Harry moved away and could feel Draco's glare at the back of his head.

"I'm going," Severus spoke quietly, his wand gripped tightly in his hand.

"We're both going," Harry said, pointing to himself and Draco.

"We'll all go," Sirius said. "This is Dumbledore we're talking about. One of the most powerful wizards there is. Everyone will be needed."

"No," Falde stepped forward, his Shadow dissolving from around him. "Too many will only cause more problems."

"Oh my. He's… huge," Amortia whispered and blushed when Sirius turned and gave her a knowing grin. But it was true. This Ukatae was the tallest person in the room, easily a foot taller than Draco who was the tallest out of them all now. And he was a beauty as well with his dark brown hair mixed with golden streaks pulled back in a high ponytail. His teal gaze held no mercy for anyone who went against him. And he was nothing but muscle.

"That guy could crush our heads in with one hand," Sirius said eyeing the stranger up and down. "Would you look at the size of his sword?" he exclaimed.

"Focus, Siri," Lucius hissed.

"I'll go!" The tall white haired Ukatae chirped and smiled just as another Ukatae appeared beside the large one and glared at Ozemir. This elf was just as tall and muscular as Falde.

"No way, Ozemir! You'll stay here where you'll be safe and in no way can cause any problems. You
would only be a hindrance," he said harshly. Harry felt sorry for Ozemir. That hadn't really been very nice and Ozemir truly looked crushed for a split moment before he closed the embarrassment and pain away. Ozemir smiled brightly and since Harry was the only one to have seen the pain that had momentarily crossed his face, Harry knew his cheerfulness was false. Someone who could put a mask that good on must have a lot to hide.

"Ozemir will be going. Talyn you will stay here and look after the young ones."

"Understood." This did not upset Talyn, as she understood why Falde wanted Ozemir to go along. The four of them were a team and would be together for a very long time in order to protect the young ones. The team needed complete harmony, but as long as Brumek thought of Ozemir a pest, there would always be discord among the group and that would harm their dynamics as a fighting and protection team. Ozemir needed to prove his worth to Brumek, as the harsh warrior was the only one who didn't think Ozemir belonged. There may be other reasons why Brumek was so harsh with the Scholar but Talyn thought the main reason was because Brumek thought Ozemir couldn't be trusted to fight for or take care of the young ones. Talyn knew this was not so, which was why she didn't mind at all that Ozemir had been placed on their team.

"What?" was Brumek's disbelieving cry after hearing Falde's choice in participants. He stared at Falde, outrage enveloping his entire body.

Falde ignored Brumek for the time being. "I shall go along with Ozemir and Brumek." He pointed to the two as he said their names so everyone would know whom he was talking about. "One more shall go along… Who do you chose to send?" he asked the humans standing around.

"I will be going. You'll have to kill me to stop me from going," Severus replied.

"That can be easily arranged, human," Brumek said, happy enough to take his anger and frustration out on the human.

"Severus can go," Harry said, resigned to the fact that he was leaving Hermione's life in the hands of strangers and he knew that Severus would not stop until he'd brought Hermione home. And arguing about it would take too much time.

"Your choice is accepted. Now, we need something your witch friend handles frequently, and it would be better if it were something magical that has her magical signature on it. We can track her faster that way."

Harry's brow furrowed in thought. "Did Hermione take her school trunk back to her parents' house?"

"I don't know. She said she was moving back to her parents, but I don't think she took her things."

"Simple way of determining that," Lucius spoke and then snapped his fingers inviting a house elf to pop in front of him. "Bring Hermione Granger's school trunk here to me immediately."

Hermione had left her trunk at the manor and when the elf brought it, Harry immediately began digging through it and finally found what he was looking for. He raised it up for everyone to see.

"A Galleon?" Amortia asked. "How does that have her magical signature on it?"

"This is one of the Galleon's Hermione charmed for me to be able to tell the members of DA when we'd be having meetings. She charmed them all so it has her signature on it. Will this work?" Harry handed the fake Galleon to Falde. The Ukatae studied it before finally nodding.

"This will do nicely. It has a strong signature upon it. We will find her in short time." Falde nodded
to Brumek, who immediately walked in a circle then clapped his hands, opening a circle of mist. Severus entered the circle with the other *Ukatae* and they quickly disappeared.

"This sucks!" Harry ranted. "We have to sit here and wait!"

"Don't worry, young one," Talyn soothed and ruffled his hair. "Falde and the others will find your friend in short time and have her back here within the hour. I promise."
Hermione awoke and found herself chained to a chair backed against a wall. She groaned as she tried to right herself since she had been slumped over in an awkward position for who knew how long. She opened her eyes only to see nothing but the dark, and the only thing she could hear was the dripping of water somewhere close by. Wherever she was, the place smelt damp and moldy.

Closing her eyes, Hermione thought about her situation. She remembered being Apparated here and then immediately knocked out. She didn't understand why she'd been cast unconscious but at least it had been a sleeping spell instead of the killing curse. She immediately suspected Dumbledore was behind this, though there was no actual proof except that one of her captors had referred to an old man waiting for them. In another time, she would have believed this was the work of Voldemort, but happily that could not be the case here. Unfortunately there was no one else she could think of who would be behind all this. Hermione shifted again and gasped when the shackles on her wrists began to bite into her flesh and cut the skin.

"Wh… Who's there?" squeaked a trembling voice from close by. Hermione's eyes widened in the dark when she recognized whose voice that belonged to.

"Neville? Neville, is that you?"

"Hermione? Oh thank Merlin!" In the dark, she could hear other chains moving around and a sigh of relief as the sounds drew near her.

"No offense but I really wish you weren't here, Neville," she mourned. She didn't want anyone else in danger. Neville made a sound of agreement.

"At least we're not alone wherever we are," he finally said.

"That's true. Has anyone else been taken?"

"Dean and Luna."

"Are any of you hurt?" Hermione tried to jump her chair forward closer to Neville's voice, and she soon found a hand touching her shin.

"I'm fine… But Luna is still unconscious and they took Dean out somewhere when we arrived. Dean and I were together and they ambushed us. I-I've been hearing Dean screaming… but it stopped a few minutes ago. Please tell me they didn't kill him, Hermione!"

"Who are they?"

"Not sure…"

"Okay, Neville. Everything will be all right. Help will be on its way."

"How do you know?" Neville's voice rose an octave above Hermione's voice. "No one knows
where we are and my Gran isn't expecting me home until tomorrow…I'm supposed to be staying the night with Dean and his parents gave us midnight as curfew. That's hours away!"

"Neville, calm down. Panicking will not help in this situation. Besides, Professor Snape will know something is wrong when I'm late for our meeting and then Harry will…" Hermione closed her mouth with a snap. Was that why they were here? Was this just another plan of Dumbledore's to lure Harry in to capture him? That seemed the most likely. Hermione's eyes narrowed in the darkness. Over her dead body would Dumbledore get anywhere near Harry.

"Right. Neville, move back a bit."

When she felt the hand leave her, Hermione concentrated all her might on the shackles around her wrists and ankles and after a minute of concentration, they snapped open. She took a moment to rub the circulation back into her hands, grimacing against the pain and blood she felt coming from her wrists, and then she was able to produce a ball of light in her palm causing Neville to gasp and flinch back.

"Goodness, Hermione! I didn't know you could do that! Wandless!"

"I've been doing some studying over the summer." Hermione brought the light closer to his face. "They've beaten you!" Neville's poor face was bloodied and bruised. He had a fat lip and both eyes were dark and swollen. But even though he was clearly frightened, he stared back at her with a determined gaze.

"Don't worry. It's probably worse than it looks."

"Regardless, the bastards will pay."

"Hermione, you're scarier than normal," Neville said quietly as Hermione lifted part of her robe to dab away the blood from his face. She then released him from his own chains. They both moved to Luna and were happy to see the girl looked unharmed.

"We need to get out of here and find Dean before they do what I think they are going to do… Luna? Luna, wake up… Why isn't she waking?" Hermione was able to wandlessly undo Luna's shackles as well, though all the wandless magic was taking its toll on her.

"Err… and uh… what exactly do you think they are going to do to us?"

Hermione chose to ignore his question. No need to send Neville into panic overdrive. As it was she was already panicking about Dean. She hoped to Merlin he wasn't already dead. Just thinking about that brought hopeless tears to her eyes. They couldn't lose Dean. Hermione refused to lose anyone! She stood up and walked around the small room. The walls were concrete, covered in dust and mold, but other than that there was nothing else, not even a hole or crack. Lifting her hand, she saw the same was true for the ceiling except there were two black pipes running just above the door and straight across the ceiling through the opposite wall, and both pipes were dripping water.

"Help me sit Luna up."

Neville nodded and they managed to bring Luna into a sitting position. Hermione brought the ball of light up to the girl's face for a closer inspection and saw she had a large bump on the side of her head. No wonder Luna wasn't waking up. She was concussed. But at least the blonde girl was breathing normally.

"Are you well enough to walk, Neville? Can you help me hold Luna up when we go?"
"Yeah, I've got her." Hermione helped Neville get Luna onto her feet and when she was sure Neville had a good grip on the Ravenclaw, Hermione moved to inspect the door.

"How much do you bet they left it unlocked?" she tentatively touched the door handle, checking for any spell that might cause harm if touched from the inside, but thankfully she was able to grip it with no repercussions.

"No way. They wouldn't keep prisoners in an unlocked dungeon."

"But we're kids, remember, and I don't feel any wards around the door." Hermione prepared to pull the handle when suddenly she heard voices. Voices growing louder as whomever it was grew closer. Hermione immediately doused the ball of light and helped Neville pull Luna over to the corner on one side of the door.

"Neville, we have to physically attack whoever this is," she whispered and quickly helped prop Luna against the corner, carefully resting the blonde's head against the wall. "We have to move quickly before they realize we're not chained anymore."

"I'm with you," he said with a firm nod. As Hermione moved over to the opposite corner, Neville crouched down, prepared to attack. Both he and Hermione prayed there were no more than two or three guards outside of the door as they could only distinguish two voices. They held their breath as the door banged opened and the flickering light poured in. Immediately a body was thrown in, broken and bloodied. Hermione only had a moment to notice it was Dean and he was alive, glaring at the guards, before the guards realized they were missing prisoners.

"What the-"

Hermione moved quickly, running up and throwing her fist into the air, watching it connect with the face of the man who'd taken her wand before in the alley. She didn't knock him down, but was able to stun him just long enough for Neville to barrel forward and knock both wizards back into the wall opposite the open cell door. Despite the fact that she knew she'd just broken her hand, or a couple of fingers at least, Hermione followed Neville out and jumped on one of the guards, the adrenaline rushing through her body and keeping the pain at bay, while Neville did the same to the other wizard. The wizards were bigger than they were, but Neville seemed to have an affinity for fighting with his fists because he was coming on top with the wizard he was fighting, and was able to keep the bastard from reaching for his wand.

Hermione wasn't so lucky and caught an elbow in the head. She slumped sideways off the wizard, completely disorientated allowing the wizard enough time to reach for a wand. Hermione thought it would soon be over because she couldn't move to deflect any curse, but they were all surprised when Dean suddenly ran out of the cell and smashed into the guard, knocking the wand a few feet away.

"Dean!" Hermione cried happily as she lunged for the wand as it rolled across the stony floor. She grabbed it with her left hand and aimed, "stupefy! Stupefy!"

There was a moment when all she could hear was the ragged breathing of herself and her friends. "Dean? Neville?"

"I'll be good as soon as we get out of here," Dean rasped from where he lay sprawled on top of one of the unconscious wizards.

"I'm good," Neville replied and popped his knuckles. "Think I could have gone a few more rounds…what about you, Hermione?"
"I'll live to hurt whoever is behind this. Let's get Luna and get out of here."

Neville nodded and went inside to retrieve Luna.

"Dean, did you see who did this to you?" Hermione bent down to help her fellow Gryffindor up. Just like Neville, Dean's face was covered in bruises and cuts and he was favoring one leg. Luckily for all of them, he could walk with just a small amount of help.

Dean nodded and took another moment to collect his erratic breathing. He looked at her with unbelieving eyes. "Professor Moody. I didn't want to believe it at first… but it was Moody. He put me under the Crucio several times…I…" Dean leaned against the slick wall and took another deep breath. "I refused to speak about Harry or Malfoy. Moody didn't like that… Hermione? Is it true? Are you guys with You-Know-Who now?"

Hermione turned and looked Dean straight in the eye. "Yes it is true. But you must understand, Dean. Voldemort isn't the same as he once was. Draco and Harry have given him his soul back and we are with him, not working for him."

"I did notice the lack of Death Eater attacks," Dean replied after a moment of thought.

"Okay, can we go now? Honestly at this point, I don't give a damn who you guys are sided with. Seems the side we were on is the bad side after all… At least the Death Eaters never tried to kidnap us before!" Neville said after coming from the cell with a semi conscious Luna under his arm.

Hermione nodded and knelt down beside the wizard who Neville had been fighting and found two more wands from his robes.

"These are yours, right?" she held them up. Neville grinned and took one of them.

"Mine's the one you used to stupefy these two," Dean said to her. Hermione passed it to him then snapped the last one in three pieces and threw it at the unconscious wizard's feet. She searched again and found a fourth wand, but it wasn't hers and neither was it Luna's. She remembered what Luna's wand looked like having seen it many times during school and the DA practices. She snapped that wand as well, and belatedly realized that left her without a wand.

"Dammit, I'm letting my anger get the best of me… All right, let's go." Since the cell they were in was the last room at the end of a corridor, there was only one way to go.

Knowing Mad Eye Moody was around somewhere made her extra nervous as he could see through walls with that creepy eye of his, but Hermione tried not to focus on that thought as they moved down the corridor as quickly as they could manage. They tried to keep as silent as possible, but not completely silent because Hermione still had questions that needed to be answered.

"Did you see anyone else besides those two and Moody? Did you see Dumbledore?"

"I only saw the inside of that room," Neville murmured as he looked over his shoulder to make sure they weren't going to be ambushed from behind. It was a little late to be thinking it, but they should have banded those two arse holes in rope before they left.

"Just Moody and those two. Though Moody did say Dumbledore was displeased that the Gryfffindors were giving him so much trouble," Dean put in.

"That doesn't mean the old man is behind this though," Hermione whispered to herself, and then she nearly shrieked when Luna's light voice drifted to her.

"Dumbledore was the one who took me from my home." They all stopped walking to look at the
misty eyed girl who'd obviously regained consciousness. "He said he had a cure for my father, who has become very ill. I believed we were going to St. Mungo's, but after we Apparated, someone threw a spell at me from behind."

That was proof enough that Dumbledore had something to do with all this, and Hermione was the only one who didn't look devastated by the news as she already knew firsthand what he was capable of. Though... Luna didn't look devastated either.

"The only reason why Moody didn't kill me was because he was waiting for someone. That's what he told me. He said we weren't ever going home again." Dean looked at the ground and clenched his fists. After a moment he looked into Hermione's wide eyes. "I want to talk to Harry and Malfoy," he declared.

"Me too," Neville said. "We're already targeted. Might as well be for something worthwhile... I mean besides just being friends of Harry's. We've always been Harry's friends, but after this... I want to be targeted because I'm an actual threat. Moody threatened my Gran. I won't stand for it." Dean nodded along with Neville.

Hermione was speechless and could only turn to look at Luna, who smiled serenely back at her. "Of course I want to join. It'll be just like the DA except now it should be DWD. Down With Dumbledore... or something."

Hermione blinked a couple of times and then she started to laugh softly. "Let's just get out of here first. Have any idea where the exit is?"

"Sorry," Dean, Neville, and Luna said together. Of course it wouldn't be easy, Hermione sneered inwardly.

"All right. I assume we're in a dungeon or basement so that means the way out is up. Dean, did you at least notice if they brought you up or down stairs when they were returning you to the cell?"

Dean's face brightened and he began to nod. "Yeah! They brought me down two flights after Moody was done with me. I can lead you to those... only, we passed a few wizards on the way."

"Give me a wand please," Hermione demanded. Dean immediately handed his over. "I may do things you wouldn't usually expect of me... I hope you don't think less of me after this."

"I'll always love you, Hermione," was Luna's encouraging reply, and her tone was serious for once, which did much to relieve Hermione's worries.

"After what I've just been through, there is nothing you could do to these people that I would think they don't deserve," Dean murmured darkly with a firm nod at her.

"Um..." Neville visibly gulped. "Just don't make it too gruesome. Kay, Hermione?" The girl in question nodded. She took one step forward then quickly stopped, causing Dean to bump into her. She slapped her forehead then started to berate herself.

"I'm such an idiot. An idiot!" She spun around, scaring her friends to backing up a few steps. "Here." She waved the wand and cast a Disillusionment Charm over Dean, Neville, Luna, and then herself. They proceeded to follow Dean's directions, and their walk was slower as the halls were darker than at first expected. This was perhaps to their benefit because although they were Disillusioned the wizards around were sure to be trained to be able to sense the charm, but at least the charm coupled with the darkness, they would have a moment's advantage of surprise. And a moment was all Hermione needed.
Dean found the first stairwell quickly and without any trouble. There was no one around, and it was confirmed they were in a muggle building because the stairway was lit with fluorescent lights, though most of them were out, and the lights that were on were flickering. There was a large red B painted on one of the walls up the stairs. "The basement…. We're in a muggle building," Hermione said.

"Yeah," Dean agreed in a whisper. "Might be easier for us to escape."

"Let's stay close together…"

"Don't have to tell me twice," Neville muttered behind her.

"And we should watch our backs as well."

"Luna and I've got that covered."

Halfway up the stairs, the four escapees froze when hearing footsteps coming down towards them in a rapid pace. Dean tugged on Hermione's sleeve and motioned that they should back down a few steps where there was no light flickering over them. She nodded and they retreated the few steps and then flattened themselves as best they could against the wall. Hermione and Neville lifted their wands, only to freeze when a strange sound started to float around them, getting louder and louder.

"Luna, what are you doing? Stop! You'll give us away!" Neville hissed when he realized the noise was coming from her.

Luna was staring up the stairs, her eyes as glazed as ever, and she was loudly humming an uplifting tune. Hermione started waving her hand in front of her neck, the universal cut off signal, but Luna smiled and pointed to her ears, then covered Neville's ears while still humming.

"What the hell is that noise?" someone croaked from above them.

"Ahh! My head! It hurts!"

Luna's humming increased in volume again, and Hermione started to feel weird, like her body was slowly being covered in sand and she quickly slapped her hands over her ears and watched as Dean did the same.

A moment later two wizards came into view, rolling down the stairs and landing at the platform at Hermione's feet. They were completely lifeless.

"Luna?"

"Hmm?"

"Care to explain what you just did?" Hermione asked staring at the dead wizards. And she had been afraid of how her friends would react if she had to kill?

"I felt like humming something to lighten the mood. That's all."

Neville shivered and put a little pace between himself and Luna, his face as pale as the white wall behind him.

"But your humming just saved us the trouble of having to curse those two!" Dean cried. "Not to mention that you've killed them!"

"Did I? How strange… Shall we go on?" Luna skipped up the stairs and knelt by her victims and
took the wands from their hands. She held one out for Hermione and kept the other for herself.

"These aren't our wands either!" Hermione cursed, but she held onto the wand Luna gave her and handed Dean's back to him.

"At least now we're all armed," Dean said as he took his wand back. "Hermione?" the brunet witch was staring at the two men and was frowning terribly.

"This is Sturgis Podmore and that's Elphias Doge. Both were members of the Order."

"They're kind of old to be going around kidnapping people... then again no one is as old as Dumbledore," Neville mused.

"I'm sure a lot of the original members of the Order are with Dumbledore... we'll have to watch out for them no matter what."

They returned to climbing the stairs. Soon they came to the ground floor and pushed open the door just as a group of wizards and a witch rushed towards them, their wands already firing curses. Hermione ducked and quickly shut the door again.

"Use everything you've got!" she said to her friends, who all nodded and readied themselves.

Hermione flung open the door and slammed it into the face of a snarling witch, and used the cutting hex on another wizard who was right behind that witch. That wizard backed away towards the opposite wall, clutching at the gaping wound to his stomach. Hermione quickly disarmed him and unlike McNair, she had not held back with the cutting hex this time and that wound was probably fatal. Over her shoulder, Dean and Neville were both yelling Expelliarmus and were able to disarm two of their attackers, one being the witch with the broken nose.

Hermione saw Luna rush out to deal with the unarmed witch and another two wizards on her own with no hesitation. She was surprisingly inventive with her spells and quickly left those three immobile and bleeding, a lot. Hermione thought she wasn't the only one to have studied curses over the summer. When they were safe and sound, she and Luna would be having a long discussion.

"Look! There's a door leading outside!" Hermione shouted after catching a glimpse of sunlight shining in from somewhere and finding it was coming from a glass door at the end of the hall. "Run!"

"Don't let them get away! Mad Eye will have our heads when he gets back and sees they've escaped!"

Hermione spun back around just in time to see one wizard throw a curse at her. She wasn't able to block in time and was hit and thrown against the wall.

"Hermione!" Neville yelled while he and Dean were fighting with two wizards who were far better at wand battling than the two young Gryffindors.

"Run!" she yelled as she scrambled up, her left arm now hanging limply at her side due to a cutting attack. She returned her wand to her right hand, even though it was broken and moving it sent fiery waves of pain through her arm. She pointed it at the wall just behind Dean and Neville's attackers. "Expulso!" she screamed. The wizards tried to dive away, but they were still buried under a ton of concrete as the ceiling as well as the wall came down on them.

That took out two more, leaving one running after Dean, Neville, and Luna, while the last wizard stood in front of Hermione leering at her.
"You're lucky we're supposed to keep you alive for the time being," he said as he and Hermione began to circle each other. "You might as well give up-" He froze up like stone as Neville had cast Petrificus Totalus at him. Hermione kicked the petrified wizard and watched him fall like a tree.

"Like we're really going to leave you, Hermione…give us more credit!" Dean said harshly. Hermione smiled her gratitude at him and then looked to where Luna stood over the wizard who'd been chasing them as they ran for the door. The wizard was writhing on the floor with what looked like gallons of blood pouring out of his mouth.

"This one's not getting up," Luna said airily. Hermione nodded then turned to the wizard frozen in front of her.

"Idiot!" She yelled and kicked him again. "I want my wand!"

"C'mon, Hermione! More might come and you're hurt." Neville wrapped an arm around her waist and tried to pull her to the door, but she pulled away from him.

"No! Tie the ones who aren't dead up," she ordered forcefully. "I'm not leaving without my wand!"

Luna happily obeyed, skipping from one wizard to the other, shooting ropes out of the end of her wand and wrapping them tightly around the ones who were still breathing.

"Dean, go block the door to the stairs."

"Yes ma'am." His response was automatic, and he blushed when he realized what he'd said. But Hermione was being so forceful and authoritative that it had seemed the right thing to say at the time.

"Finite Incantatum." Hermione stared at the wizard at her feet with steely eyes. "You have no idea what you've brought to yourself by kidnapping us, do you? The wrath that you've brought upon yourselves. I almost feel sorry for you…Almost. As it is, you're lucky you are still alive…"

Hermione looked and noted only two other wizards were tied up. "We've killed everyone else but you three."

The wizard snarled up at her. "You muggle loving bitch! I'll kill you my-"

"Crucio," She replied softly. The wizard's screams brought the attention of the others and they watched. Dean and Neville were speechless, but Luna looked unconcerned. "I want to know where our wands are. If you want me to stop you will tell me…" She bent forward and whispered so that Neville wouldn't hear her next words. "Or I'll torture you until you go insane."

"It's in a room upstairs!"

Hermione released the curse and watched as the man stopped writhing in pain. "Why are our wands in a room and theirs weren't?"

"I'm not saying anymore!"

"Crucio…. Really I could do this all day. Do you know who my teacher is? No? I'll tell you then. Lord Voldemort himself."

"Ahh! Stop!"

"Answer me!"

"Moody! Moody was supposed to take your wands and plant them somewhere after you've been
killed!” he screamed over the pain and sudden fear her statement had caused. "To blame the crime on someone else!” he panted. Hermione lifted the curse once again.

"And when do you expect Moody to return?" Again her voice was soft, but her eyes were hard as stone. She tried to keep the pain hidden, but it was becoming hard to do that, as well as stand straight on her own.

"When the sun sets."

"Hmmm… Are there more of you here?"

"No."

"I don't believe you. Imperio." Hermione walked a few steps away to slide down the wall and sit. "Now I want you to go and get our wands. If you meet anyone on the way don't let on that we've escaped. Understood?"

"Yes."

"We'll be waiting outside of that door." Hermione pointed to the glass door down the hall. "I'll give you five minutes. Understood?"

"Yes."

Dean, Neville, and Luna kept their wands on the wizard as Hermione released him from the ropes just in case he was like Harry and could fight off the Imperius Curse.

"Shouldn't we go with him to make sure he's not faking?" Neville inquired.

"I would, but I'm having trouble moving," Hermione replied. "Besides, I'm pretty sure he's not faking."

Dean and Neville exchanged worried glances before bending down and helping Hermione up. They all had cuts and scratches from the short battle, but Hermione was the worst as she was losing a lot of blood.

"You need a Healer," Dean said as they limped towards the door.

"I'll be fine for a while."

When they left the building they were all nearly blinded from the sunlight and it took a moment for their eyes to become adjusted. They were lucky enough to still have the Disillusionment Charm on as they found themselves in the middle of downtown London. They all turned around to look at the building where they had been prisoners.

"What is it?" Neville asked, chewing on his bottom lip worriedly.

"It's an empty office building. Bold of Dumbledore to use a place in such a busy part of town," Dean answered. "There are a lot of muggle repellent charms on it too. That's why they're all passing by without looking at us. Usually seeing a group of teenagers torn and bloodied would cause some sort of commotion, wouldn't it?"

"Don't you think it was stupid of Dumbledore? If someone comes after us, we can always get lost among all these people."

"Not with our robes on," Hermione muttered. "We stick out like sore thumbs."
"I can transfigure our robes into muggle clothes. I'm very good at it, you know."

"Oh, err…" Dean, Neville, and Hermione weren't sure what to say. They'd all seen Luna's weird choices for outfits and if they allowed her to choose their outfits they may come out looking like clowns.

"First, we should move out from in front of the building."

Everyone nodded, and just as they turned to move to the side of the building someone touched Hermione's left shoulder where she'd been injured, forcing a pained cry from her lips. Dean and Neville quickly turned, their wands pointing at the offending person, who backed up with wide eyes.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Don't shoot!" he yelled, waving his hands back and forth in front of his face. Hermione's eyes widened when she saw who it was. It was Dudley Dursley.

"Wait," She told the boys. "This is Harry's cousin, Dudley."

"His cousin?"

"Yeah, that's right! And I recognized you," he said to Hermione. "You came to the house once before… I wanted to ask about Harry."

"But he's a muggle! How can he see us? And what about the muggle repelling charms on the building? We're so close to it that he should have immediately forgotten about seeing us. He shouldn't be able to be this close." Dean voiced all their thoughts.

"I don't know." Hermione was really perplexed for once.

"Look, here come our wands," Luna chirped and pointed as the door opened and the wizard came out holding two wands. Dean and Neville had moved from pointing their wands at Dudley to pointing it at the wizard. They kept an eye on him and on the door.

"Luna, grab the wands." Hermione looked at the wizard. "Now you will go back in and allow no one to follow us." Immediately the wizard turned and went back into the building. Hermione snapped the wand she'd been using and vanished the pieces, with Luna following her actions.

"Hey, what's going on? You're bleeding." Dudley pointed to her shoulder and then took a good look at all of them. "You're all bleeding." Dudley took a step back; suddenly not sure he should involve himself. They all looked horrible.

Hermione suddenly pointed her wand at him. "What are you doing here? It seems like too much of a coincidence…"

"Mum and I live nearby. We moved to the city after… Well, we just moved to a small flat. I've been out looking for a job. I saw you from across the street… Hey, do you guys need a place to go for a bit?"

Hermione studied him for a minute, and wished she had mastered Legilimency already, but he looked sincere so she was going to trust him a little bit. And besides, they needed a place to rest. "Please."

"But Hermione, you need a Healer!" Neville cried.

"I can't Apparate anywhere in this condition, Neville, and I don't think I can do anymore magic. Can any of you Apparate yet?" they all shook their heads. "I have no more energy. We can send a
message once we're safely inside somewhere." She looked back at Dudley. "Do you have a problem with us?"

"No! That's why I came over to speak to you. C'mon. It's not too far. Let me help you." And much to Hermione's surprise, he wrapped an arm around her waist to help her walk.

Neville and Luna did the same for Dean, and they began to follow after Harry's cousin, who was bewildered and wondering why he offered to take them to a safe place and to his home no less! His Mum was going to kill him.

"Mum!" Dudley shouted as soon as they entered the flat and quickly ushered Hermione over to the couch to lay her down. "Mum!"

"Yes, yes, I'm coming, No need to raise your voice, Dudders…"

Dean couldn't help it. He snorted in amusement as he slumped into the recliner next to the couch and Neville sat on the floor at the end of the couch. Luna sat down on the couch and put Hermione's head in her lap and began to softly stroke her brown hair while humming a soothing tune. Everyone tensed up upon hearing the sound, but after a moment and they felt nothing going on inside their heads, they relaxed.

"Dudders?" asked Dean. "I thought your name was Dudley."

Dudley turned away to hide the bright blush spreading across his face and looked at his mom who stood in the doorway between the kitchen and the living room. Her face had gone pale upon seeing what was happening in her living room.

"What's the meaning of this? Dudley, what's going on?"

"Mum, she's hurt really badly!" Dudley exclaimed and pointed to the witch on the sofa. "And they needed a place to go." Petunia looked at the state the kids were in and cringed at all the caked blood on them and the bruises covering their arms and faces.

Petunia took a deep breath and nodded. "All right. Go get some wash clothes and boil some water." She knelt down beside Hermione, and the two women stared at one another.

"You and your family caused Harry so much pain," Hermione began, intending to give the woman a piece of her mind, but Luna's humming became louder and a buzzing filling Hermione's head while her eyes began to shut on their own accord. "We'll speak about this later," she told Petunia. "Luna, don't kill me…"

"She's so tired. We should let her sleep," Luna said softly and smiled when Hermione fell into a deep sleep.

"You didn't kill her, did you?" Neville practically shrieked and stood staring wide eyed down at the two witches. Dean saw Hermione's chest was rising and falling and sighed in relief and he sank back down in a chair.

"Relax, Nev. Luna hummed her to sleep…” He looked at Luna. "What kind of power is that?"

"But I didn't do anything," Luna replied and watched as the muggle woman pulled Hermione's outer robe off her shoulders to inspect the damage.

"This is horrible! Who could do such a thing?"
"Well you see, we were all kidnapped and we just managed to escape with our lives..." Dean began, and then he laughed. "Nothing out of the ordinary." Neville and Luna joined in his laughter. Petunia looked at them like they'd lost their minds.

"Being friends with Harry guarantees risking your life. He keeps us on our toes."

"So you are friends of Harry..." Petunia took the cloths Dudley came back in with. She wet one and pressed it against Hermione's opened wound. "And you don't mind that you are always in danger?"

"Harry is worth it," Luna said simply and smiled dreamily at a spot over Petunia's right shoulder.

"Yeah. I have no regrets when it comes to being friends with him," Neville proclaimed proudly and Dean nodded.

After a few minutes of attending to Hermione and doing all she could, Petunia moved around the room, checking the others over and applying bandages where needed. She was surprised at how much she enjoyed being able to help them, but was very disgusted how damaged they were and the fact that they took with a grain of salt was quite disconcerting.

"You all need to see a doctor. I should bring you to a hospital."

"No. We'll be good as soon as we get word to our friends. Thank you though," Neville said, and smiled his thanks at Dudley after receiving a glass of water from him. Dudley shifted on his feet, staring down at Neville, and then smiled back before turning away quickly.

Petunia frowned and looked at Hermione's pale face before standing up and putting her hands on her hips. "Then I suggest you call your friends now," she said waspishly. "This girl has lost a lot of blood. She needs proper medical treatment!"

"Don't worry," Luna spoke. "Help is on the way even as we speak."

"How do you know that, Luna?"

The Ravenclaw simply smiled and continued to stroke Hermione's hair. Not five minutes later, someone knocked on the door.

The rescue party landed as a group inside the room Hermione and the others had been kept in only to discover that it was empty except for the chairs and chains. Falde moved to one chair and picked up the chains. His nostrils flared as he studied the stained shackles.

"This blood belongs to your friend," he said in a flat voice to Severus. "Not enough to be fatal."

"Don't talk like you couldn't care whether or not she's dead!" Severus lashed out. Falde looked back at him with an expression of surprise.

"I was only stating the facts."

"She was not the only one to be chained in here," Ozemir spoke then, cutting off anything Severus would have replied with. "Other children were kept here."

"They're obviously not in here. May we proceed?" Severus drawled. He sounded calm and unconcerned, but the three Ukatae could feel the fear and desperation coming off him.

"Ozemir. Search the place," Falde instructed.
Ozemir exited the room and sped down the corridor with incredible speed. He was nothing but a blur when Brumek poked his head out of the room.

"You are going to trust him with this? Falde, I see no sense in it."

"You are a great warrior, but your mind is completely shut. Have faith that he knows what he's doing."

"How can he know what he's doing? He's a Scholar, for Hirsha's sake!"

Falde ignored that and left the room, with Severus following closely behind. Brumek snarled at his leader's back, but also followed. Two wizards lay on the ground directly outside the door.

"They have been stupefied," Severus murmured, and cast a sleeping spell on them. "Someone powerful has done this. Usually that spell works for only a small amount of time." He could only hope Hermione was behind it. He meant she was fine and healthy and able to do magic. He looked once more upon their faces. They weren't anyone he knew and so he ignored them and turned his back on them to continue down the corridor. Besides, after he found Hermione and made sure she was in a safe location, he would be returning to exact revenge.

They came upon Podmore and Doge next. Severus sneered at their bodies, unfazed by the fact that his Hermione was probably the cause of the wizards' deaths.

"Bastards," he spat.

He and the *Ukatae* were just about to exit the first floor stairway when Ozemir appeared in front of them, holding one unconscious wizard by his neck. "Looks like a small battle was fought here. I found this wizard upstairs pacing. He's been tortured. But he's one of the kidnappers so I didn't mind hurting him just a little bit more," he explained, his talons digging even more into the wizard's neck. He pushed open the door to show them the scene of chaos and blood.

"Are human children usually this violent?" Brumek asked, obviously impressed.

"When they need to survive. Did you find them?" Severus asked. "Did you find Hermione?"

"She is not here," Ozemir replied. "But...I smell her..." He moved over to inspect the wall near the stairway door. There was blood smeared there. "Your witch. She's badly hurt." But then he stood up and his eyes were twinkling. "Those chains downstairs were broken. Not unlocked. Looks like your friend escaped on her own... or one of the others escaped and helped her. They must have done this damage."

"So where are they now?"

"Let's ask this fellow." Ozemir smiled goofily and shook the wizard in his grasp. Severus cringed seeing the blood leaking from the unfortunate man's neck where Ozemir's talons were dug in. And shaking someone like that guaranteed they would not be fine and dandy afterwards. The wizard looked like a rag doll under Ozemir's grasp. In fact Severus could have sworn he'd heard the man's neck snap.

"Revive him," Falde ordered.

Ozemir nodded, removed his sharp long nails, and slipped an arm around the wizard's neck. Severus' eyebrows rose. Ozemir was the shortest and thinnest of the male *Ukatae*, but still the wizard's head only came up to Ozemir's neck. Severus looked upon him with more of a perspective.
Ozemir lifted a finger and pushed it against the man's temple and breathed into the wizard's ear, "wake up, human." The wizard shuddered and his eyes opened. Falde came forward, drawing a whimper from the human.

"Where are the children you took?" he growled.

"I don't know… I don't!" he screamed when Severus came forward and pushed his wand into the wizard's neck. "Please don't Crucio me! That Granger bitch did it enough!"

"She did? Good for her…. Crucio."

Severus' eyes gleamed with pleasure as the wizard writhed in Ozemir's arms. Ozemir himself looked thoroughly enraptured by the torment the human in his arms was going through. Brumek had never seen that look in his violet eyes before.

Severus stopped the curse and then used Legilimency on the bastard and found out whom Hermione had been a prisoner with. "You took Longbottom, Thomas, and Lovegood as well…. By Moody's orders?"

"Yes. They left through that door." The wizard pointed with a shaking finger down the hall. "I swear I don't know where they are! Let me go! I don't want to be here when Moody returns."

"Why, afraid he'll kill you?"

"He will!"

Severus shrugged and began to walk down towards the door. He stopped and turned around when he heard a crash, and saw that Ozemir had thrown the unknown wizard against the wall before following Falde and Brumek.

"Ozemir." The violet-eyed Ukatae looked at Falde. "We leave no witnesses and we take no prisoners. I know you know this. Stop pretending so much."

Ozemir smiled sheepishly. "Forgive me." He spun around and pulled out a dagger. Severus was unsure of where it could have come from because his long white tunic had no pockets and there were no pockets in the tight black pants he wore either. But a dagger he had, and he deftly threw it at the wizard who was currently running down the hall in the opposite direction. Brumek watched with surprised eyes as the dagger embedded itself dead center in the back of the wizard's neck. Ozemir sped off to retrieve the dagger and as he walked back to them, he was seen licking the blood off the blade, causing Severus to shudder in revulsion.

"Mmm, I love wizard blood. Not as good as Ukatae though." Ozemir slowed his pace so that he could walk beside Severus, who glanced at him warily. "Ever been bitten by a Ukatae?" he asked.

"No." Severus tried to move away, but Ozemir followed, his eyes gone strangely red.

"Do you want to be? I'll make it good for you." Ozemir then flashed a smile that had the wizard blinking dazedly back at him and kept him firmly in place beside him.

"Stop it!" Brumek growled, and yanked Ozemir away from Severus.

"You two, focus and return to your Shadows. We're going outside," Falde ordered.

Severus watched as the three dissolved into gray mist, and he was fairly certain the only reason he could see the shadows now was because he'd been looking at them at the time they disappeared. And
he also knew that if he were to take his eyes off them for a moment, he wouldn't be able to see the shadows anymore.

"Pick up the pace, human!" Brumek hissed. Severus followed but he glared the entire time at the shadow he thought was Brumek. He was beginning to hate that creature very much.

Severus stepped out onto the sidewalk and his eyes went wide with recognition. "London? Why would Moody bring them here?" he wondered aloud, and then he noticed that all the muggles were passing by without looking at him, and realized there was a muggle repellent charm on the building.

"Who cares? Let's just find this girl and get out of here! I hate humans…"

"That's because you have no experience dealing with humans. But that's okay, Brumek. We can't all be perfect," Ozemir replied with a cheeky smile.

Brumek replied in a calm tone. "I'll kill you."

Severus heard Falde sigh in exasperation, and he was inclined to agree with him. Their bickering was doing nothing but wasting time. "Are you going to help me find Hermione or not? You said she was injured…"

"I apologize. You are right," Ozemir replied, and then he turned to Falde. "Her scent is very strong. They didn't leave too long ago. Shall we go in disguise and follow?"

"Yes. You and the wizard will go. Brumek and I will remain in Shadow and follow… Change his clothes as well to blend in with the non magical people," Falde instructed, indicating Severus' black wizards' robes.

Before Severus knew it, he was dressed in a black muggle business suit with his hair pulled back into a ponytail. He nearly yelled in surprise when he found a very curvy blonde woman hanging onto his arm. She was wearing a short black dress and high heels, lips and nails painted a dark red color. He wouldn't have realized it was Ozemir if the Ukatae hadn't kept the color of his eyes. The woman looked at him with those strange purple eyes and winked at him.

"Shall we go, handsome?"

"Falde! Don't let him go out like that! What the blazing hells, Ozemir?"

"What? The last time I disguised myself, you said I looked disgusting… Doesn't this please you more?" he batted his long blonde lashes at the shadow. The shadow that was Falde began to softly rumble, and then the rumbling turned into full-throated laughter.

"Stars, Ozemir! That's the best disguise I've ever seen from you. You look perfect!"

"Falde! Are you agreeing with this… and your laughing?" Brumek hadn't heard his Commander laugh in a very very long time. He'd been nothing but serious for centuries.

"You have to admit, Brumek. That is a very good disguise," Falde replied as they followed Severus and Ozemir. The two made their way down the road at an almost break neck speed, ignoring all the glances their way. Ozemir, of course, was getting most of the attention. Those long, bare, and perfectly sculpted legs had every man that passed him looking Ozemir up and down.

"It's not inconspicuous! Everyone is looking at him," Brumek hissed.

"You as well." Falde chuckled when Brumek growled deeply. Up ahead, Ozemir's smile widened.
which had many people tripping over their feet.

"Stop smiling like that fool!" Severus hissed. "And you can let go of my arm."

"No. We're a couple… What's your name, by the way? We haven't been properly introduced. You are a relation of Harry, which means we'll be seeing plenty of each other."

Severus groaned his displeasure at that. "Severus Snape."

"Very nice to meet you, Severus. I am called Ozemir."

"Yes, I know." Severus rolled his eyes. "I thought you people were Dark Creatures. Why do you go around smiling all the time?"

"Because we can, human. We smile when we want, we kill when we want, we take what we want… or at least we used to. All without any remorse over our actions. Our natures are dark and what you see on the outside is only an illusion… most of the time-" Ozemir snapped his mouth shut after he realized he'd probably said too much.

"I'm not about to go blabbing away to people about things I've learned about you or your kind," Severus said, sensing that's why the Ukatae had stopped talking and understanding his reluctance. "I'd be selling out my own nephew if I were to do that, wouldn't I?"

"Yes, I suppose that's true." Ozemir smiled at the surly wizard then stopped when he realized he'd lost the scent of the witch. "We need to back up."

"It's here," Falde said and dissolved through a door with Brumek following right behind him. Ozemir could just sense the smug smirk shot his way.

Severus followed and once inside he realized it was a building of muggle flats. Maybe Hermione knew someone who lived here and had sought out shelter. He looked around the Entrance Hall, looking for some clue, when he saw a board with numerous names on it with the word POST on a plaque over the board. He went over and studied it before looking up in surprise. "This can't be right." Checking the list once more and memorizing the door number, Severus turned to the lifts, and ignored the Ukatae who followed him onto the lift without a word. Not a word was spoken as Severus pushed the button for level five and he waited in tense silence as the lift began to rise.

Finally they arrived on the fifth floor, and by this time Severus' hands were clenching and unclenching to relieve himself of the urge to run the rest of the way. He made himself calm down, and when he came to number twenty-nine he took two deep breaths before knocking on the door. Behind him Brumek snorted.

"You could just knock the door down."

"I know these muggles."

From inside they heard the sound of footsteps approaching the door. "Make sure to check the peep hole before you open the door!"

"I will Mum! Geez." Severus scowled at the peephole. There was a gasp. "It's that guy that came to get Harry. With the huge nose and the greasy looking hair…"

"Let him in!" Three voices cried out in relief. Severus frowned when he recognized Hermione's voice was not one of them. The door was pulled open and Severus and the Ukatae immediately let themselves in and shut the door.
"Pro… Professor Snape! I never thought I'd be happy to see you!" Neville cried from where he continued to sit on the floor.

Severus scanned the room, noting the state of Longbottom, Thomas, Lovegood, and Hermione, who was lying on the couch asleep with her head in Lovegood's lap. Petunia Dursley was sitting in front of the couch, dabbing at Hermione's wound with one hand, and placing a wet cloth upon the young woman's forehead with the other.

"Thank God you're here!" she said and stood up. "This girl needs a doctor immediately. And the others could do with a look over, especially Mr. Thomas," she said indicating Dean's ragged appearance. Moody had done a number on him.

"You took them in?" Severus asked in disbelief.

"Of course I did! They are children after all. Dudley found them and brought them here."

Dudley backed up a bit when he found shrewd black eyes pinning him with a stare. "I-I knew she was a friend of Harry's," he mumbled, pointing to Hermione. "And they needed a place to hide…"

"Thank you," Severus said. "Thank you very much for protecting them."

Dean and Neville's eyes widened upon hearing the sincerity in the Potions Master's voice. They'd never heard him speak like that before.

"Ah good." Ozemir clapped his hands excitably. "All's well that ends well." Bringing to him the attention of the hormonal teenage boys.

"Here you are, Professor," Luna said, and waved her hand over Hermione's sleeping form. "She's been waiting for you."

Severus nodded. Petunia moved out of the way and watched as the wizard bent down and picked Hermione up as if she was the most precious thing in the world. When she saw the look he was giving the young woman, Petunia realized that she was the most precious thing in his world.

Luna stood up and went to Ozemir. "You're very pretty."

"Thank you!" he squealed, and ran a hand down his curvy side. "I suppose if one likes these things…" He motioned to his large breasts.

"No, I'm not talking about your disguise." Then she looked towards the corner and waved at the Shadows no one else could see. "Hello!"

Severus just barely kept from gaping. Luna was staring at the hidden Ukatae with clear wide eyes. The dazed expression was gone from her face. It was the first time he'd ever seen her look serious. And she'd seen through Ozemir's disguise? How was that possible? The muggles were looking at her as if she'd lost her mind because they couldn't see Falde and Brumek.

"Um… Professor Snape?" Dean came forward and looked at Ozemir. "Who's this?" Neville came forward as well, and they were both looking at the Ukatae with glazed expressions. Severus turned to find Ozemir giving both young men 'the smile' as he so dubbed it. Severus shifted Hermione in his arms then smacked the back of Ozemir's head.

"Stop that! They are already idiots, no need to make it worse! And we need to get these four to a Healer."
"I'll make the circle then, shall I?"

"Yes." Severus sneered.

Ozemir walked in a large circle, as big as he could make it within the small room, and when he'd completed the circle, he clapped his hands and a white light sprung from the line he'd walked. When the light receded, the circle was filled with a white swirling mist.

"Into the circle, young ones," Ozemir chirped. Luna was the only one who automatically entered, and it took a glare from Severus to get Neville and Dean to enter. When they entered the mist and nothing bad happened to them, they breathed a sigh of relief.

"Thank you, again," Severus said to Petunia and Dudley and then he entered the circle as well.

"Yeah, thanks," Neville said.

"You helped us a lot," Dean spoke to Dudley. "Thanks. We owe you one, mate."

"Maybe we'll see you again." Luna smiled and waved.

Petunia stepped forward and raised a hand. "Could you tell Harry that we think of him… please?" Petunia asked.

"Tell him we're sorry… even though I know that's not enough to forgive us," Dudley put in.

"I will tell him," Severus replied.

Ozemir turned to look at Falde and Brumek, and found they'd already returned to the Manor. He smiled with mischief and walked over to Dudley. Severus watched as the Ukatae whispered something into Dudley's ear, placing both hands on the boy's chubby cheeks. Dudley's eyes went incredibly wide, and then they nearly popped out of his head and his entire body went red when Ozemir dragged his hands down Dudley's cheeks, down his neck, his arms, his fat waist and stomach, over his thighs, and finally down to Dudley's ankles before pulling his hands away.

"Farewell humans!" Ozemir entered the circle with a chuckle.

"What did you say? Why were you molesting him in front of his mother?" Severus snapped.

"I didn't molest him. Did I?" Ozemir called out to the boy, who vigorously shook his head. Ozemir waved one last time and then clapped his hands.

Petunia and Dudley watched as the mist within the circle began to swirl around like a cyclone and the people within disappeared without a sound. As soon as the wizards and witches were gone, the mist disappeared, leaving the living room as it was before the circle was created. Petunia and Dudley stood there staring at where everyone had just been standing.

"Mum?"

"Yes, Dudders?"

"Did we do good?"

"Yes dear." Petunia wrapped an arm around her shaking son.

"Mum?"
"Hmm?"

"She told me I'm a wizard."
Eye For An Eye

Life Renovations

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Eye For An Eye

Harry had been pacing the library since Severus and the Ukatae vanished. He thought pacing would calm his nerves and at the same time give him something to do, but it was only increasing his agitation. He kept picturing Hermione in the worst possible situations… and it was entirely his fault!

"I know what you are thinking." Draco said into his ear. He pressed against Harry's back and wrapped both arms around his stomach. "This isn't your fault." Harry leaned back against Draco, allowing the embrace only because he was in dire need of the comfort and seeing everyone waiting patiently was driving him insane.

"How can you say that? It's always my fault… I shouldn't be here waiting." Harry pulled away from Draco, thinking he didn't deserve comfort right now. "I need to go find her."

"I think you're only upset because you aren't able to be the hero this time around," Draco stated as he watched Harry walk towards the door.

Harry stopped and turned around to face him. "Draco," he warned.

"No, because really, that's the feeling I'm getting," Draco crossed his arms over his chest and sneered. "Poor Potter with his hero complex stuck here without anything to do."

A year ago that would have pissed Harry off, but now it only amused him. "Stop trying to distract me, git. And I don't have a real hero complex. That's just a joke… one I believe you started because of your petty jealousy," he reminded as he moved back to stand with Draco.

"You do have a hero complex," Ginny stated after hearing the last part of the conversation.

"No I-"


"Why don't we take a vote, hmm?" Draco looked around. "Who here thinks Harry has a hero complex?" he asked loud enough for the room in general to hear. Hands belonging to Lucius, Sirius, Pansy, Charlie, Amortia, Tom, Ginny, Blaise, and Draco rose immediately into the air. Harry huffed and snarled at them all.

Talyn stood back and watched with a small grin crossing her face. Draco had successfully distracted his young mate. Not only was he keeping Harry from going off to find his friend, but he was also keeping his mate from worrying about what was happening and whether or not it was his fault his friend had been kidnapped. Talyn wondered how her comrades were faring and if they'd found the witch yet. She glanced across the room to look at the human timepiece and found half an hour had already passed. They should have found her by now. Talyn hoped Ozemir had proved himself useful if just a little bit. Brumek's constant complaints about the Scholar were getting on her nerves.

"How can you be so calm?" she heard Harry ask Draco.
"I've had years of practice. When dealing with my family and the Dark Lord, one must have a firm
grip on being calm," Draco answered, leaning against a dark wooden table. "Don't worry. I'll be
calm for the both of us…” He reached out and pulled the frowning brunet against him and Harry
buried his face against his chest.

"I don't know what you all are worried about," Lucius suddenly said. He was tired of seeing all the
faces in the library look as if someone had died. It was really annoying. "This is Hermione Granger
we're talking about. The Dark Lord's apprentice!" He slammed a fist down on the table before
standing and glared at Harry. "She will not allow herself to become a victim. Shame on you for even
thinking it! I don't know her as well as some of you, but I do know this much. Hermione's a fighter.
She'll be fine until Severus can get to her."

Harry turned his head slightly to peek at his lover's father, half his face still planted firmly against
Draco's chest.

"Mr. Malfoy has a point," Charlie said and Amortia and Sirius nodded in agreement.

"I hate your father," Harry said while returning Lucius' glare.

Draco chuckled and sifted his fingers through the black locks. "That's because he speaks the truth."

"And she can do an assortment of spells wandlessly. Many defensive spells… She's very adept at her
defensive spells," Tom put in.

Talyn smiled from where she stood, impressed by all of them, and liking these humans even more.

"A healer is needed, along with four beds," a voice said from the shadows beside her.

"The witch?"

"She is well and our work is done. Bring Ozemir to the forest when he has arrived," Falde said
before disappearing.

Talyn walked over to Harry and ruffled his hair. "Your friend is safe, little one." Harry spun around
and began to smile. Talyn raised a hand. "There is need of four beds and a healer."

"Father, we need a small infirmary set up with four beds."

Lucius nodded and summoned a house elf. He instructed the house elf to arrange the infirmary in the
large unused suite in the south wing of the manor. Another minute passed before the Ukatae circle
appeared. Severus stepped out with Hermione still unconscious in his arms and immediately went for
Amortia.

"She's lost a lot of blood, Amortia."

"Quickly, let's get her to bed," Amortia said and she and Severus quickly followed Lucius out of the
library before anyone could say another word or even get a good look at Hermione.

"What are you three doing here?" Draco asked upon seeing Dean, Neville, and Luna. Knowing
Hermione was in good hands with the Healer, Harry didn't follow and turned to his battered friends,
wondering the same thing. His eyes narrowed before they even spoke, already having a fairly good
idea as to why.

"That's a splendid way to travel!" Luna cried, thoroughly enchanted by the Ukatae powers. When
the circle vanished, she then disappeared among the aisles of books, dragging Ozemir along with her
by the hand. The *Ukatae*, still in the form of a busty blonde, did not complain as he had wanted to
get his hands on the books since first seeing them. Falde was not present so he thought it couldn't
hurt to have a little look.

"I have to admit, it is better than side-along Apparition and Portkey," Neville added after helping
Dean limp out of the circle.

"Dumbledore had us taken as well," Dean answered Draco's question.

"You're kidding me?"

"Wish I was… Moody throws a mean Crucio."

"Alastor Moody tortured you?" Tom asked coming to stand beside Harry. Dean and Neville looked
at him and nodded, wondering who he was. They recognized everyone else. Neville even
remembered seeing Amortia at St. Mungo's sometimes when he visited his parents.

"Dean was the only one to be interrogated though. Hermione was able to break out of the chains
before they came for Luna and me and we attacked—"

"You can explain everything that has happened after you've been looked after," Sirius interrupted,
throwing an arm around Neville's shoulders. "Let's have Amortia have a look at you first."

"Where's Luna? She should be looked after as well," Dean spoke up before they made to leave the
library. "She may accidentally hum someone to death again."

"Eh?" Blaise asked, looking around for the blonde girl.

"Excuse me? To death? Again?" Harry sputtered.

"Our Luna?" Ginny's eyebrows shot way past her hairline. "You must have been hit in the head,
Dean."

"Loony Lovegood killed someone?" was Draco's question.

"Three or four wizards—swear on Merlin!" Neville exclaimed when everyone looked at him like he
was crazy. "She hummed two of them to death!"

"I think both of you have head injuries," Harry murmured. "What you say makes no sense."

Draco looked at him. "Isn't that Loony's forte?"

Tom looked around trying to spot this person they were speaking about. Why were they so surprised
the witch had killed someone? Murder wasn't something hard to do. Even Hermione could do it.
And it was easier to do when in self defense.

"Ozemir! Come out and bring the human with you. She needs to see a healer and we must depart!"
Talyn called.

From somewhere in the back aisles, suspiciously close to the hidden Dark Arts section, everyone
heard a sorrowful moan, and then a tall, scantily clad blonde woman appeared holding hands with
Luna Lovegood as if they were best friends.

Ozemir bent down to whisper in Luna's ear, "we'll come and look some other time."

"Yes please. I would like that very much, Ozemir," she said dreamily.
"That's the one who hummed?" Tom asked.

"The short one, yeah." Harry answered, and then looked at the taller blond as the two stopped in front of them. "Why the hell are you dressed like that?"

"What? You don't like?"

"I prefer blonds with flat chests," Harry dead panned. "You look ridiculous."

"She doesn't look like she would or could kill a bug," Tom said to Draco about Luna.

"Hmmm?" Draco was sneering at Ozemir's appearance and wasn't paying much attention to anything else.

Ozemir snapped his fingers and his human disguise dissolved. "That's better," Harry replied and Draco turned his sneer onto him.

"Not really, mate…" Blaise muttered and was seconded by nods from Dean and Charlie. Ginny kicked Blaise's shin, while Pansy glared death at Charlie who seemed oblivious.

"Oi, you lot! You can catch up later." Sirius pushed Harry and Draco towards the door. "We're going to see Amortia. Thomas, can you walk?"

"Some help would be appreciated," Dean muttered. "Don't know how much longer this leg will hold me up. Moody did something weird to it."

"We're going to stay here and wait for you guys to get fixed up," Pansy said, indicating herself, Charlie, Blaise, and Ginny. Charlie went back to looking scared and watched in desperation as he was left almost alone with Pansy once more. Draco waved to let Pansy know they heard.

"You alright, Neville? Luna?"

"Just scratched up is all," Neville answered Harry as they walked down the hallway following Draco who was the only one to know where they were heading.

"You have a lovely home, Draco," Luna remarked softly, her glazed eyes roaming over every bit of the walls, floors, and high ceilings as they moved through the manor.

"Thank you, Loony," he answered, trying to hold back the sneer in his voice. Wouldn't do to get Harry mad at him now.

"Luna, are you hurt?" Harry asked as he came to walk beside her.

"Did you know Dumbledore can be really aggressive when he wants to be?" Luna said, rubbing her head where she'd been hit. "Just like a Snook stork. He's a liar too!" She smiled dreamily while wrapping her arm around Harry's and laying her head against his arm. Usually her head would fit perfectly in between his shoulder and neck, but now that Harry had grown so much due to his transformation, Luna's head rested a few inches below his shoulder. Tom watched as Draco looked over his shoulder at them and then moved to pull Harry away from her. But Harry shook his head forcefully.

Fine… but only because she's been through an ordeal. Draco sneered one last time at the Ravenclaw before turning forward again.

Thanks.
Harry nodded as he watched Draco walk ahead of him and took in the blond's spectacular form. His eyes zeroed in on Draco's neck and he licked his lips and felt his fangs tingling with anticipation.

They entered the makeshift infirmary just after Hermione regained consciousness and came in to hear her talking a mile a minute, demanding to know where Dean, Neville, and Luna were and whether her friends were all right or not. Amortia was trying to calm the witch down without much effect. Even when Hermione was told her friends were fine, the witch would not believe. Now that she was safe it seemed Hermione was allowing herself to become hysterical.

"Shut your mouth, witch! Let the Healer attend to you. I assure you, your idiot friends are fine!" Severus finally snapped. His nerves were so frazzled by this point that he couldn't take any more.

"Don't call my friends idiots, Severus!" she shrieked back. "I wouldn't be here if it weren't for them! Where are they?"

"She's got a pair of lungs on her," Dean murmured to those around him. "We're here, Hermione! All of us are fine, thanks to you."

Hermione gasped upon seeing her friends. "Thank Merlin," she breathed and then proceeded to burst into tears.

Severus felt his chest tighten when he saw the tears in Hermione's eyes and her entire body was shaking. Her eyes announced to the world how frightened she was, and now that she and her friends were safe, she was allowing the fear and pain to take over. There was only one thing Severus wanted to do right now, but he couldn't do that while Hermione was still injured.

"Heal her already!"

"Don't snipe at me, Severus." Amortia pushed him away and shut the curtain around the bed. To distract himself from the crying witch, Severus bullied the others into their beds. As soon as Luna lay on the bed, she closed her eyes and began to hum.

"Luna, stop!" Dean and Neville yelled and their shouts echoed around the room. Both of them covered their ears.

"Um… Luna?" Harry went to stand next to her bed, and waited until her eyes were opened and as close to focused on him as they would get. "Did you really kill four wizards? Two by humming?"

"Don't know, Harry." She smiled and waved her hand in front of her in a careless fashion. "They say that's what happened. Hermione killed three of them. Two by crushing them and one by splitting his stomach open."

"But Luna, you made a waterfall of blood pour out of that one bloke's mouth!" Neville exclaimed.

Luna giggled. "Yes. It was rather very gory, wasn't it? But also fascinating like a grotesque painting in the making."

"Oh… err…" Harry weakly smiled, not sure what to say to that. Who in their right mind would describe a killing like a painting being created? But Luna wasn't always in her right mind, was she? He looked at Tom and shrugged. The Dark Lord was studying the Ravenclaw intently.

"And what were you two doing?" Draco asked Neville and Dean. "Knitting or something?"
"Hey, we helped…" Dean muttered, embarrassed that he hadn't been more help.

"Seems Hermione and Luna were better equipped with their damaging spells. We've only been taught defense! Wish I knew more though. I would love to give Moody a piece of what Hermione dished out to those other wizards."

"You leave Moody to me," Severus said lowly. "He will pay for this. Now, tell me what happened."

"We could always view it in the Pensieve."

"Good idea, Harry. I want to see what happened," Tom said.

"Tom Riddle," Luna suddenly said, bringing everyone's attention back to the Ravenclaw. Her eyes focused directly onto the Dark Lord and she sighed. "Not what I expected." Tom watched her eyes glaze over and drift away from him to stare at nothing at all.

"Tom Riddle?" Dean whispered, staring at Tom, who stared blankly back. Everyone who had attended the DA meetings knew who Tom Riddle was thanks to Harry's teaching.

"Yes?" Tom raised an eyebrow and stared back at the black boy.

"Oh, well I… just… um…. Harry?"

"Tom, stop looking so intimidating," was Harry's reply, which really wasn't what Dean was expecting him to say. It didn't help relieve his fear at all.

"How did she know?" Draco asked about Luna knowing who Tom was. "Why is she acting more than weird? Her craziness has taken on a new level."

Severus breathed a sigh of relief when Hermione's cries seemed to have stopped; though Amortia could still be heard talking to the young witch soothingly.

"Hey, Harry," Neville began and fidgeted under everyone's stare, especially Tom's. "When we managed to escape from the place Dumbledore took us to, we met your cousin. He took us to where he lives, let us stay there until Professor Snape and that woman or man or whatever came to get us. His mum even cleaned us up and stuff. Just thought you might want to know…"

"You're joking! Dudley and Aunt Petunia would never do that. Did they know you were associated with the word magic?"

"Yeah."

"There's no way they would have helped you!"

Severus sighed. "It's true. Your aunt and cousin told me to tell you they think about you and are truly sorry," Severus accounted. Harry stood still and silent, staring at Severus. He was unsure of what to say. What could he say?

"And why should Harry care about that?" Draco asked while studying his nails. "He's finished with them forever."

Suddenly the curtain around Hermione's bed flew open and she glared at them. Her hair was a wild crazy mess. A thin black bathrobe replaced her dress robes. Her shoulder had already been healed, and now Amortia was casting spells over her right hand, making disgusted noises over the damage.

"Harry, I'm going back to say thank you! Your cousin could have passed us on the street, but he
came over because he wanted to know how you were. Are you really going to stand there and say nothing? Plan to do nothing?"

The tone in her voice suggested he better think about it and come up with the answer she wanted. Harry's eyes narrowed on his best friend and they commenced with a war of staring. It could have gone on forever if Severus hadn't stepped in between them, breaking their eye contact.

"I am not going to say more about the matter. That will be your decision, Harry." Severus turned and looked at Hermione and began to use his Professor persona. "A decision he will make on his own and in his own time. Is that understood, Miss Granger?" Hermione frowned, while her eyes blazed. "Do you understand?"

"Yes, of course!" she snapped. And then her frown turned into a grin. "I understand perfectly, Sevvy dear."

There was a round of hushed laughter, except from Neville who look petrified. Was Hermione trying to commit suicide? Sirius and Lucius, who had been standing near the doors, content to watch and listen also began to laugh. Lucius shook his head and led Sirius out of the room. "Bye bye Sevvy!" Sirius called before disappearing. Hermione glared one last time and wandlessly swished the curtains closed again. Harry and his friends made sure to hide their grins when his uncle turned back to them.

"Professor Snape? I need to go back to my father at St. Mungo's," Luna said. Everyone turned to the girl to find her standing by her bed with a frown on her face. "I can't leave him alone. I've already been away from him too long."

"What happened to your father?"

"He's very sick. The Healers don't know what's wrong with him. But I need to be there. So if you could show me to a Floo."

Severus looked over when he spotted Amortia who had come out from behind the curtains. They locked eyes and she shook her head sadly at his inquiring look. Luna didn't see the look, but everyone else did and a heavy silence fell over them all.

"I'll just go and find a Floo… Thank you for the rescue, Professor Snape."

"Just a minute, Miss Lovegood. I'll have a look at you three first, and then I'll return to St. Mungo's with you," Amortia said. "Lay back down and I'll get to you in a moment."

Amortia smiled at the girl. Luna smiled back and did as she was told. As Amortia went over Dean's injuries every second that passed she became more angry. "This boy's leg has been broken and his jaw is fractured!"

"You did all that with a broken leg, Dean? That's incredible," Neville said in awe.

"I didn't know… It doesn't feel broken, and my jaw feels fine, just banged-

"Stop talking!" Amortia quickly interrupted. "Did Moody cast unknown spells on you?" Dean nodded. "To keep you from feeling the pain," she murmured to herself. "Do not talk anymore and relax your jaw until I've fixed it. He cast the spells so that you would continue to walk around and talk despite injury…"

"What's the point of that? Seems like a waste of a spell…"

"It would cause permanent damage, Draco. Regardless of the medical treatment received," Severus
replied. "Did we catch it in time?" For a boy who was so dark, Dean was looking incredibly pale.

"But we were going to be killed. Why would Moody do that if he were going to kill us anyway?" Hermione asked. She had vacated her bed after her hand was healed and was now leaning against Tom. Dean and Neville were having a hard time believing what they were seeing, especially when Voldemort put an arm around Hermione's waist to support her.

"To torment you before death, I imagine," Severus mused. "He must have planned to keep you alive for a while... Probably until you told him what he wanted to know."

"You will come to St. Mungo's with Miss Lovegood and myself," Amortia told Dean. "Hopefully it isn't too late."

"Who gets to kill Moody?" Draco asked after they all had viewed Hermione's memories of the kidnapping and escape.

Hermione had handed over the memory and then returned to her room, having no intention of going through all that again. Severus remained behind to view the memory, but promised to visit with her after she had some rest. He promised there would be consequences for calling him Sevvy in front of everyone, to which she only smiled and nodded.

And now only Lucius, Sirius, Harry, Draco, Tom, and Severus were left, sitting around the Pensieve, all of them glaring daggers at it. Neville had been pushed off to sleep in a guest room, and Pansy, Blaise, Ginny, and Charlie left to spread the word around to the rest of their family and friends to keep on their guard. Dumbledore might try to capture someone else.

"Would it be in our best interests to kill him?" Lucius asked and when everyone looked at him with surprise and disbelief he simply raised his hand and continued, "he deserves it, no doubt, but... couldn't he be used?"

"He's completely mad, Luce. It wouldn't be good to use him. I don't see how we could anyway."

"I agree." Severus sat back in his chair, his brow furrowed in thought. "He'll only cause complications."

"He needs to be eliminated. One less dog loyal to Dumbledore," said Tom. "I think Severus should deal the killing blow, don't you? After all, it was his witch that was taken and injured." There were nods all around.

"Hermione did handle herself well though didn't she? She made me proud," Sirius said with a quick grin. "She was calm and cool the entire way."

"She made us all proud," Lucius agreed.

"A rescue wasn't even needed in the end. They did it themselves."

"I really hate to say this but I was surprised and impressed by Longbottom," Draco admitted grudgingly. "Did you see the way he took on that guard? He didn't want to stop hitting him!"

"I told you Neville can handle his own. There is a reason he was put in Gryffindor. And what about Luna? What was that about?" Harry put his elbows on the table and rested his head in his hands, contemplating everything they had seen.

"That was just creepy!" Draco shuddered. "She did it all with that loony smile of hers, skipping
around, humming. Like killing people was something she did every day."

"I agree, very creepy," Sirius said.

"I actually enjoyed watching that," Tom said softly.

"No, what you liked was watching two normally innocent witches taking the lives of others, Tom. We know what turns you on," Draco said and jabbed the Dark Lord in the ribs.

Tom smirked. "Silence, you inbred oaf."

"I take offense to that," Lucius drawled.

"Ah, Harry? Your cousin passed right through the muggle repelling charms..." Sirius began in a thoughtful manner.

"I don't want to talk about him right at this moment. I don't even want to think of what that means," Harry replied softly.

"So it is agreed? I will take care of Moody?" Severus asked understanding a change of subject was in order.

"Yes, Severus. However, we will all be going." Tom rose from the table and everyone followed his actions. "We should get there before Moody and clean up. Let's make our presence a surprise, shall we."

Brumek glared at one of the large roots of the tree he stood beside, imagining the root shooting up to curl around the neck of the human Ozemir had draped himself over. It didn't matter that it was obvious the human did not like the fact that he had Ozemir hanging on his arm. The fact was... he'd had Ozemir on his arm. And what was Ozemir thinking? Flirting with that human, chatting him up like they were friends. It made Brumek sick just thinking about it. But why was he worrying about it? Why did he care whom the Scholar spoke to?

It was probably the fact that it had been a human. That was it. He was vexed because Ozemir had been happily conversing with a mere human... Brumek nodded, determined to keep that thought in mind. It had nothing to do with Ozemir's skill with a dagger, or how his eyes had begun to bleed red while he licked the blade clean. No, that didn't matter at all.

"Talyn and I will return home and report to the Council."

Brumek nodded and hid how impressed he was that after all these years he could never hear Falde come up on him. And he'd practiced for years to be able to do the same thing to Falde and had never succeeded.

"You and Ozemir will work together. Stop thinking that he is useless," Falde said when he caught the ferocious frown cross Brumek's face. "We cannot work well as a team if you do. We cannot protect these young ones to the fullest of our abilities if you continue to doubt him. Surely his actions today have proven he can be of some use." Brumek remained silent and continued to glare at the tree root. He heard Falde sigh and didn't react when Falde put a hand on his shoulder and squeezed. "Ozemir has not always been only a Scholar. Think upon that for a while."

Brumek was so surprised that he began to sputter. His surprise was expected. Because when Ukatae decided upon an occupation, he or she remained in that one occupation until death. It was unheard of for someone to have two official occupations.
"How is that possible? And what else could he possibly be suited for?"

Falde shook his head; displeased that Brumek did not understand him. "You underestimate Ozemir, and you are letting your personal feelings get the better of your good judgment, Brumek. This is not what a good warrior does. This is not what I've taught you and you are putting us all in jeopardy by refusing to see. As my Second, you should know better."

"I don't understand," Brumek hissed with frustration.

Falde sighed. Brumek had always been the most stubborn out of all of his students. He would leave off on the discussion for now as he sensed Talyn and Ozemir returning.

Talyn and Ozemir immediately noticed Brumek's stony expression. It wasn't anything new; they saw it all the time. Brumek was always so serious about everything and he hardly ever spoke unless necessary. Except when it concerned the Scholar, Talyn suddenly realized. Brumek was very verbal to and concerning Ozemir.

"Talyn, since it was your idea to play along with the humans and the young ones, you will accompany me to report to the Council," Falde said to her and ignored her pout.

Ozemir remained silent as he heard this, but he shifted uncomfortably on his feet when he realized this left him alone with Brumek. The warrior surely wasn't pleased with this arrangement. But Brumek remained silent even when Falde explained that the young ones would be leaving once more to London to find revenge for their friend's abduction, which meant that he and Ozemir would need to follow as well.

"Interaction?" was all Brumek asked.

"Not unless it is necessary." Falde nodded at both of them, his gaze lingering on Brumek. "You may go." He and Talyn watched them race across the grounds and disappear inside the Manor.

"Brumek has always been stubborn," Talyn said, turning to Falde.

"If he will not see, I'm afraid we'll have to change team members... Ozemir will volunteer without thinking because that's the way he is."

"Ozemir shouldn't have to leave. He's done nothing wrong and he's perfect for this mission. I sense he is already trusted by the young ones."

"I agree."

"What do we do, Falde? I like our team."

Falde tugged on her braid. "Stop pouting. How many times do I need to say warriors don't pout?"

"But I look beautiful when I pout," she replied and swung her braid around her shoulder to her back.

"That is true, but it is also distracting." Falde returned his attention to the Manor. "As for Ozemir and Brumek, we can't do anything about that at the moment. You and I have an appointment with the Council."

"I don't like the Council... They are a bunch of weak idiots. They'll all be dead within the year. Why should we take orders from them?"

"I said stop pouting."
Severus stood across the street from the office building in London's town center with Harry and Draco, staring at the four-story empty office building. Harry and Draco had doused their Ukatae physical traits and were dressed in teenage muggle clothes; Harry was back in his jeans and black t-shirt while Draco chose to wear black cargo pants that rode low on his hips, a black tank top, and a blood red short-sleeved shirt that he'd left unbuttoned. Harry was sure it was unbuttoned just to show the world how well toned he was. Severus was wearing the muggle business suit again as he refused to wear any casual muggle clothes. Harry enjoyed life so much that he refrained from commenting on how well Severus looked dressed like a muggle businessman.

"Shall we go in? I don't like standing out here in the open," Draco spoke while what seemed like hundreds of people passed them on the sidewalk. It was one of the busiest times of the day.

They walked right into the building the muggles didn't seem to notice. Once Harry knew what everything looked like and where everything was, he was able to return to Malfoy Manor and bring Sirius, Tom, and Lucius back in the Ukatae circle. They all had a look around, made quick time in repairing the damage and hiding the bodies. The two that were still alive and tied up were immediately killed. When all was said and done, the seven of them were left with over an hour to wait before the sun would set and for Moody's return. Harry and Draco felt waiting outside would better suit them, and they made their way to the roof, where their presence was hidden by high walls on all sides. Draco complained it might as well have been called another level of the building, just incomplete because it was missing a ceiling. After that, Draco found a number of other things to complain about as well. Harry told him to shut up and appreciate the fact that there was a breeze and fresh air.

"I could have done without the waiting though," Harry conceded where he was leaning against the wall staring at the opposite wall. Draco, who happened to be leaning against that wall, shifted and gained Harry's undivided attention. Draco hummed his agreement, shoved his hands into the deep pockets of his pants and leaned his head back against the wall, showing off the pale column of his neck. Harry licked his lips. He could smell Draco, could smell the blood flowing through his lover's veins...

Harry pushed off the wall and closed the distance between them. He caressed the flawless skin. Draco closed his eyes and hooked his arm around Harry's waist and pulled the Gryffindor flush against him. Harry replaced the caressing finger with his tongue, swirling it around the jumping pulse point a moment before sinking his fangs into Draco's warm flesh.

Draco's breath came out in short gasps as his heady blood flowed into his mouth. Harry purred against Draco's neck as he sucked and Draco's tremors grew and his knees gave way under the euphoria. Draco started to slide down the wall with Harry following and he didn't allow one spec of space to come between them. Finally he shifted Draco onto his back so that he could lie on top of his lover. He felt Draco's hand move into his hair, the grip was almost painful but was only because Harry was doing his best to torment Draco by continuing to slide against his obvious erection.

"Stop or I might have to fuck you right here," Draco whispered.

"It'll be better if you wait to do that after you've killed. I'm telling you, nothing is better!" Ozemir called from somewhere above them. Harry raised his head and chuckled before licking the fang wounds on Draco's neck closed. He sat back and straddled Draco who looked on him with glazed eyes.

"Is that true?" Harry looked around and found Ozemir sitting at the top of the wall grinning down on them. Brumek was standing on top of the opposite wall facing out, sneering at all the humans below.

"Oh yes, blood lust and all that… at least that's what I've always heard," Ozemir said cheerfully with
his body leaning forward, while his legs swung back and forth. "I apologize for watching, though I'm not very sorry. I haven't had a good blood in so long," he mourned.

"We don't mind you watching this part." Harry grabbed Draco's shirt and pulled him up and guided Draco's face to his neck. "Just not—ahh," an eager mouth pierced his neck, "just not…the sex part." Draco growled against his neck and Harry forgot all about Ozemir.

"Course not… wouldn't dream of it." Though his tone suggested he was lying.

"Ozemir," said Ukatae looked over surprised to find Brumek was now sitting beside him, his eyes locked onto the white haired Ukatae. "We were told no interaction."

Ozemir had nothing to say at first. Brumek's voice, usually so cold and harsh, was soft and he was sitting so close that their legs were touching. His long black hair was coming loose from its high ponytail in the wind, with the blood red streaks seeming to glow from the light of the setting sun. Ozemir studied Brumek's face while trying to control his surprise. His face was as always. Hard. Brumek's face was a little tanned, well rounded, and not thin like most Ukatae. Like their leader, Brumek's face was scarred, but the scar wasn't as long or noticeable like Falde's, whose scar was a crescent shape that curved from the top of his eyebrow down his cheek to his neck. Brumek's scar was a thin line across his chin. But he had other injuries that were very noticeable. Brumek was missing his right ear and his nose was crooked, all gained from battle. Most highbred Ukatae thought less of him because of these wounds but Ozemir believed that made Brumek even more beautiful.

"I'm not interacting. I'm observing, recording information in my mind," Ozemir finally said before turning away from those cold gray-piercing orbs.

"What did you do before you were a Scholar?" Brumek asked and watched carefully for Ozemir's reaction. The cheerful expression on Ozemir's face morphed into impassiveness as he swiftly stood with incredible balance. He quickly walked away along the edge of the wall.

"I've always been a Scholar," he called back in a strangely cold manner.

Brumek didn't know what to think then. This was the first time Ozemir had walked away from him and spoken in such a bitter tone. Usually it was the other way around. He glanced down at the young ones, then hastily stood and turned back to stare at the human city. The young ones were beginning to do more than just take blood…. They should know better!

"Aren't you on a mission!" he yelled over his shoulder at them. "You need to focus!"

"We are focused," came Harry's soft husky reply.

"That's not what I meant! Not on each other, idiot!"

Ozemir jumped down from the wall and approached the two young ones. He lifted his hands into the air and brought his wrists together with his palms cupped to the sky. He kept his hands up for a few seconds as he moved until he was standing over the two who were wrapped up tightly around each other. Ozemir then moved his cupped hands over the young ones before separating his wrists and opening his hands. Buckets of water seemed to magically appear from the sky then, only raining down to soak Harry and Draco, who then sprang apart and jumped to their feet, soaking wet. Draco glared murderously at the elf.

Ozemir turned his back on them and looked up at the sky. "Strange... It didn't look like it was going to rain." He laughed. "Oh well."

"Where did the water come from?" Harry asked. It only took him a moment to realize that Ozemir
had done the right thing. Draco however looked like he could do murder.

"The precipitation in the air. *Ukatae* can utilize anything having to do with nature. I simply gathered the precipitation around the immediate area and brought it all together…"

"That's really wicked! I want to learn how to do that."

"Eventually, I will be the one to teach you…"

"But not now because we aren't supposed to be interacting with you… This is a stealth mission, Ozemir!"

Brumek shook his head in frustration. Ozemir had been angry and cold before but whatever had bothered him, he must have pushed it away because the Scholar was back to being as carefree as always… and there! That stupid goofy grin!

"Draco, leave Ozemir alone. He's right. We can play after we get Moody," Harry said when he noticed Draco's dark look, his eyes cold with malicious intent as he inched closer to the Scholar. But upon his mate's words, Draco stopped. He still looked really mad though. It was confirmed when Draco whipped out his wand, dried himself, then stomped off to the stairs, not looking back once.

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Alastor Moody immediately knew something was wrong when he entered the seemingly empty building. There was always something wrong in his mind. When he entered the building, everything looked as it should be and Jacks was even there to meet him in the hallway. Still, Moody suspected something was off.

"Anything happen while I was away?" he gruffly asked, pushing passed Jacks to the stairway. Moody looked around with his magical eye, and still he could see nothing out of the ordinary.

"Where are the others?"

"Three are below guarding the prisoners and the others are patrolling the halls."

"I didn't see them." Moody pointed his wand on Jacks. "They aren't patrolling."

"Maybe they went for a break. C'mon, Mad Eye. Stop pointing that at me. Why are you always so suspicious?"

"Hmm." Moody dropped his wand and returned to climbing the stairs, though he continued to keep an eye on Jacks with his magical eye.

"Moody? That Granger witch has been demanding to see you. She won't shut up."

"Is that so?" Moody stopped again and furrowed his brow in thought. "I was going to work on that idiot Longbottom next, but she will do. I'll go down myself and do it there. Maybe if we torture them all at once, one of them will talk upon seeing their friends in pain… That's how they generally work."

Moody and Jacks changed direction and headed for the basement. When they arrived they could already hear Hermione's shouts from the cell. Moody sighed and rubbed the bridge of his nose. He didn't feel like dealing with Granger. She was a very stubborn witch. "We should probably kill her right away. She'll be more trouble than worth. Unfortunately she is also the only one who probably knows exactly what Potter and Malfoy are up to with You-Know-Who…" he said more to himself. Jacks stayed silent behind him.
"Let me out you son of a bitch! I know you can hear me! I swear I'll kill you!"

Moody growled as he neared the cell and didn't even bother to use the magical eye to view inside, though if he had he would only have seen the illusion cast on the cell by the *Ukatae* showing that there were prisoners inside. "She's chained, correct?"

"We followed your instructions," Jacks responded in a flat tone that had Moody turning to look at him from over his shoulder.

"Jacks?"

Jacks rose an eyebrow in what was a really uncharacteristic move, putting Moody on his guard, though it was a few seconds too late. Jacks had already begun to move, swiping his hand between them. Jacks' fingers, which now sported long claws, sunk deep into Moody's right arm. The damage done by the claws nearly took the old wizard's arm off. Moody howled in outrage and pain and dropped his wand to cradle his useless arm to his chest. Jacks waved his hand and Moody's wand flew into it.

"You won't be needing this anymore." He destroyed the retired Auror's wand and vanished the remaining pieces.

"Jacks? What is the meaning of this?" Moody growled while staring at the mangled arm against his chest. He was in so much pain; he knew he was defenseless, especially without his wand and the use of only one arm.

"I'm sorry but Jacks in now unavailable due to death. You'll have to deal with me instead."

Moody looked up from his arm, recognizing the voice. "Potter!" he spat.

Harry dropped the glamour as he spoke and glared back at Moody, baring his fangs. "That's right…” he grinned wickedly when the door behind Moody opened. "And company."

Harry shoved Moody into the cell and followed. Draco, who had opened the door and was the one who had been playing Hermione's recorded voice from his wand, kicked Moody from behind and Moody flailed forward to land at the feet of Lucius, Sirius, Severus, and Tom, all who sat in chairs against the wall. Harry and Draco transformed into their animal forms and sat at the door to guard the exit, happy enough to let their friends do all the torture.

Moody's eyes widened on the two massive felines. Harry stepped forward, growling so loud that Moody whimpered just slightly and scrambled back when Harry swiped at him with a huge paw. Draco came forward and bit onto Harry's tail and pulled the panther back to the doorway. Harry whined at his mate who merely flicked his ears and dropped the black tail.

"What have you done to the others?" Moody asked after regaining some of his composure.

"You mean the incompetent fools you left to guard our people?" Severus smiled. "Hermione and the others killed some of them when they escaped and Tom was happy to kill the rest. You shouldn't feel too bad, Alastor. I'm sure your people tried their best, but Hermione and the others escaped all on their own. We didn't get here until after the children had left…”

"Hermione won't like it that you've called her a child, Snape."

"Shut it," Severus hissed at Sirius.

"Do what you want… I'll not say anything. Might as well kill me now," Moody panted, looking
around the room. He looked from Severus over to Sirius, then Lucius, and finally to Tom. When he saw Tom his eyes widened. Oh, yes. He knew exactly whom that young man was who smirked at him.

"Moody… After what you did to Hermione and the others, do you really think we'll give you an easy death?" Lucius drawled.

"Hermione is it? Taken a muggleborn as your lover now, Malfoy? Guess she's good enough for dog shit… Then again I hear she'll do anything to gain power."

Both Severus and Sirius surged to their feet. Sirius got to Moody first and kicked him in the mouth. "Watch your mouth!"

Moody spat out the broken teeth and blood from his mouth and began to laugh. "Always quick with the temper. It's what got you killed the first time, isn't it, Black? A shame you were able to come back."

Severus stepped forward and shoved his wand under Moody's chin. "Keep talking in such a way, and we'll leave you here for the cats' dinner. I assure you, they are hungry."

Both Severus and Moody looked at the jungle cats. Harry and Draco stood on all four and meowed hopefully, both licking their muzzles, anticipating bloodied meat. Severus smiled at them. "But you wouldn't want to die that way, would you? It wouldn't be dignified for a wizard like you, would it?"

"Do your worst, Snape," Moody replied.

"Ah, he's no fun," Sirius whined and slumped back into his chair. "He's not even begging for his life."

"I would like to know why you chose to kidnap the other three. I understand the need to abduct Hermione, but for you to take Lovegood, Longbottom, and Thomas… They wouldn't know anything," Tom said, his eyes glittering with the prospect of soon to be torture. He caressed his wand lovingly while looking down at the old grizzled wizard. "If you explain your actions, I'll tell you what we plan to do." Everyone looked at him, surprised. But Tom had a calculating look in his eyes. "I'll even tell Dumbledore what we're up to…" At that both cats roared their outrage, a sound so loud that even the muggles would have heard had the building not had silencing spells around it.

"You're lying," Moody replied, staring at Tom.

The Dark Lord stood slowly and moved to stand between Harry and Draco, both of who were looking at him with questioning eyes. He reached down and caressed both their heads. "Beautiful," he whispered to them and the Ukaate began to purr loudly. Tom turned to Moody. "No I'm not lying. You see… I want that old man to know what we're about. I want him to realize there is nothing he can do to stop us… Dumbledore's coffin has already been nailed shut. I just want him to realize he's already in it…"

Moody didn't look like he was going to talk anymore and when Tom realized this he raised his wand. Surprisingly, Moody's eyes widened then and he started to blurt out words. "Dumbledore feels Longbottom is just as much a threat as Potter and Granger," he confessed. Those around Moody began to grin. Seems Moody was terrified of the Dark Lord after all.

Harry meowed, his slit eyes held a very smug look as he looked across at his mate.

"Yes, Harry. We know. You told us…" Sirius laughed.
"I never doubted it," Tom surprised everyone by saying. "And why did you torture Thomas like you did? Why was he taken?"

"He was with Longbottom." Moody shrugged. "We figured might as well get him as well. One less troublesome Gryffindor for us to deal with." It didn't escape anyone's notice that they had said the same thing about Moody only hours ago.

"But Dean hasn't done anything…" Sirius spoke. "And you might have crippled him for life!" he shouted.

Moody laughed gruffly and shrugged. "We knew he would eventually cause us problems. It was clear he intended to remain friends with Potter after it was known Potter had allied himself with Malfoy."

Everyone in the room knew how Harry was going to take what Moody had just said, and Lucius was the first to say something that would keep Harry from thinking all this was his fault. "Then this had nothing to do with them being Harry's friends. This all had to do with your fear that more people would turn against Dumbledore and give us more support and power. You tortured Thomas on pure speculation then. You couldn't possibly have known what he was going to do."

"Don't give me the high and mighty look, Malfoy! Your side does the same thing!"

"That's true, Luce. How many times did you try to torment Harry, hmm?" Sirius said with a mighty frown, causing his husband to shift uncomfortably and look everywhere but at Sirius. After a moment, Sirius turned and grinned at Moody. "But thanks to you Luna, Dean, and Neville are now firmly on our side, having pledged their allegiance to us as soon as they could. Thanks!"

"They joined the Dark side? Why would they do that?"

"I think the vision they had of the Dark has changed, Moody. After all, we haven't really done anything wrong recently," Severus supplied. "The world will see that soon enough. There is no Light and Dark side anymore…"

"And Lovegood?" Tom continued his questioning.

"That was Dumbledore's idea. I have no idea why he wanted her out of the way. She couldn't possibly do any damage to anybody."

"You're mistaken about that," Lucius replied. "It was Luna and Hermione who killed your men."

"Dumbledore must know something about Lovegood that we do not. It must be something That would explain why he went after her himself," Severus thought aloud. "And you planned on killing all of them?"

"Yes." Moody looked like he would say no more.

Tom came forward and grabbed Moody's good arm and ripped the robes off his shoulder. Tom pressed his wand into Moody's shoulder and hissed, "Morsmordre."

Moody began to scream. "Wait! What are you doing?" he tried to pull his arm away from Tom's grasp, but the young Dark Lord was strong enough to keep him in his grip. Moody watched horrified as the Dark Mark was painfully etched into his skin. Once it was done, Tom moved back and laughed.

"Ironic, isn't it? You're the only one here who has the Dark Mark. You'll die with the Dark Mark on
your arm, and everyone in the Wizarding World will think you are a Death Eater." Tom sneered. "A traitor to the Greater Good."

"You promised to say what you've planned," Moody rasped after he regained his senses, though he continued to stare at the Dark Mark staining his shoulder.

"We're trying to make our world a better place." Tom sat back down and crossed his legs. "You and Dumbledore are nothing more than warmongers. We only want a semblance of peace… And unlike you and the Greater Good, we'll not pretend on the issue of muggles and muggleborns. We don't like muggles, but will welcome muggleborns, but only if they keep the muggle world away from us. We only want to protect our ways and create a better Wizarding World."

"That can't be it!"

"I assure you, it is." Tom replied. "Can we get on with the torture?" he asked his companions.

"Yes please!" Ozemir chirped from his corner where he appeared. Everyone heard a groan from beside him and knew it was Brumek.

"Hirsha save me! Ozemir…"

"Well they just keep talking and talking and I want to see more blood!" whined Ozemir.

"Who are they?" Moody asked, hoping to extend the time before his end would come, but he was completely ignored.

"We're not here!" Brumek growled at the room in general.

"Don't be ridiculous, obviously we are," Ozemir responded, ignoring the death glare given to him by his companion. The panther jumped up and bounded over to Ozemir, purring his happiness at seeing the other Ukatae, even though he'd seen Ozemir a short time ago on the roof. The white tiger remained fixed by the door, but Draco did share an understanding look with Brumek.

"I'll start, shall I?" Sirius said, and surprised everyone when he pointed his wand at Moody and Cruciated the bastard. "Might as well do something to make up for the time I spent in Azkaban. I have thirteen years of torment to make up for, correct?" he pulled off the curse. "I should be allowed to do whatever I want for the next thirteen years for that time spent in hell!" he snarled at the twitching wizard at his feet. Sirius racked his brain for another spell and suddenly grinned. "Censumosis!" Moody began to scream and thrash around; heedless to the further injury he was doing to his damaged arm.

"And what is that spell?" Tom asked, surprised that he had never heard of it, but it was obviously a great torture spell.

"Causes the victim to feel as if every bone in the body is literally on fire." Sirius smirked at Severus. "You weren't the only one to make up spells in Hogwarts. You're just lucky I never used it against you."

"Whatever… But I have to admit… He's screaming louder now than he did under the Cruciatus curse." Severus stepped forward and raised his wand at Moody's good arm, "sectumsempra!" He effectively cut the arm off at the elbow. He wanted to make sure the Dark Mark was attached to the rest of the body.

"It's one less bone to feel as if it's on fire, eh Moody?" Sirius kicked the cut arm aside and watched disgusted as Harry and Draco padded forward to lick at the blood pouring from Moody's body.
"Could you please not do that?" Lucius exploded at his son and Harry and then turned his back on the grotesque scene.

"Yes. Please stop," begged Ozemir. He grabbed both Harry and Draco at the back of the neck and pulled them over to the corner where he and Brumek stood to watch. Ozemir sat down and allowed Harry to rest his head in his lap after lying down by his legs. He then smiled when the massive white tiger lay on the other side of his legs and rested his head over the panther's neck. "It's not fair that you get so much blood and I haven't had any in months!" he mourned.

Surprisingly, Brumek didn't say anything to chastise him for speaking and he realized why when he looked up at his companion. Brumek's eyes were wide and unblinking as he watched the torture go on. It was obvious to everyone that Brumek liked torture just as much as Tom and Ozemir did. But that was to be expected. He was, after all, a *ukatae*. But Ozemir was surprised that Brumek was letting his guard down in front of the humans. However, he would not complain. One hardly ever got to witness Brumek being anything but serious.

Brumek looked down at Ozemir and spoke very quietly. "I'm starting to appreciate these particular humans." He received a blinding smile in response.

"You should not have messed with our witch or the others who had done nothing to deserve what you planned for them. Did you honestly think there would be no retaliation?" Tom asked.

"I'm sure retaliation was expected, but not like this," Lucius said when Moody remained quiet. "Dumbledore doesn't realize how much we rely on Hermione, does he? How ingrained she already is to our side. You didn't think we'd take her seriously, with her being a muggleborn. That was one of many mistakes you've already made. And I'm sure Dumbledore thought we would do something stupid once we found her dead, but… you both have underestimated the power behind us." He smiled when Moody looked at Harry and Draco, both of who bared their sharp teeth at him. "You're not looking so assured now, you old mad geezer. Hmm, what shall I do for my part?" Lucius tapped his finger against his chin and looked as if he was sorting through all the spells in his head.

"Oh yes… *Viscus Rupio.*" Lucius smiled after a moment. He had just erupted all of Moody's internal organs.

"*Ommiexo Confringo,*" Tom said quietly, and everyone winced when they heard every single bone in Moody's body snap and break. Moody wasn't moving now, and his mouth was open in a permanent scream, blood slowly pouring out of his mouth and nose… Everyone stood around him watching the old wizard slowly die.

"Severus, it's now or never," Tom said.

Severus stepped forward and made sure Moody was looking at him. "I would leave you to die like this, but I want you to know who had the killing blow. I want to be responsible for taking your very last breath, Moody. Just think, no one will mourn your loss with that mark on your arm… *Avada Kedavra!*"
Hermione awoke well after sundown and found Pansy and Ginny sitting by her bed, talking quietly about fashion apparel. When they noticed she was awake, both girls smiled warmly at her.

"How do you feel?" Pansy asked.

"Fine, thank you." Hermione sat up and smiled back at them. "What's going on?"

"Three things. First, the guys are off seeking revenge…" All three girls rolled their eyes. "Second, you received a letter from Gringotts a moment ago," here Ginny grinned with relish. "I advise you to open it immediately. And lastly, Neville has been pacing up and down the corridor for the last hour. He's been worried about you."

"What? Why? Why didn't you let him in?"

"We tried to but the idiot said it wouldn't be proper to come in until you were awake," Pansy replied as she stood and went to the door to inform Neville that Hermione was awake. The blushing boy followed Pansy back in while Ginny shoved the letter from Gringotts under Hermione's nose.

"Open it! Hurry up and open it!"

"Hey Neville."

"Hello. You better?" Neville asked as he came to stand beside the bed.

"Yes, and you?" Hermione replied while slowly opening the letter.

"Mione, I'll curse you," Ginny groaned in agony.

"Thanks to you, I'm grand." Neville gave her a quirky grin in which she returned before going back to the letter.

"You already know what it says?" The brown-eyed girl asked her friend. Ginny nodded. "How?"

"She got the same letter," Pansy answered instead because it didn't look like Ginny was going to answer and instead just continue to grin like an idiot.

Hermione studied Ginny and noticed the pleasure shining in the youngest Weasley's eyes. Finally, she looked down at the parchment in her hands and began to read. Her eyes landed on the newly acquired fortune and she blanched.

"What the… This can't be possible."

"Keep going. It's explained."

Hermione did read further and her cheeks went from white to red in the span of seconds. "HARRY POTTER!"
"Wow, not quite the reaction I was expecting," Pansy muttered, rubbing her ears. "I expected her to faint, or maybe even flutter her eyes and say his name in a more loving manner…"

Both Ginny and Neville snorted. "Not Hermione."

Neville watched as the furious witch threw back her covers and jumped out of the bed. He quickly averted his gaze, as she was only in a nightgown. "She's almost as stubbornly proud as most of the Weasleys."

Hermione donned a robe, and with the letter gripped tightly in one hand and her wand in the other, she stormed out of her room. Her friends quickly followed and wondered what the Dark Lord's apprentice had in store for Harry.

Ginny was laughing so hard she was having trouble breathing. "I don't know why you're upset! Don't you realize what you could do with the money? You could do anything! Think about what you could do for house elf rights!" Hermione didn't slow her pace but she did look at Ginny for a moment, pondering that idea.

"How much did he give you anyway?" she sprang forward and snatched the parchment from Hermione's hand and read over the contents. Hermione, in all her anger, did not notice Ginny's action and continued to march through the halls.

"That's rude, you know," Pansy said about Ginny reading Hermione's business, even though the Slytherin girl's eyes were pinned on the parchment as well. Both girls saw the amount at the same time and stopped dead in their tracks, unaware that Hermione had turned a corner up ahead.

"Is that more than Harry gave you?" Neville asked, reading over Ginny's shoulder.

"Way more… Way way more," Ginny said in awe. Pansy looked at her strangely.

"You don't sound angry. Aren't you mad she got more than you?"

Ginny looked at Pansy in surprise. "Course I'm not angry. Not even a little bit. Hermione is his best friend after all and they've been through so much together… Besides, with the amount he gave me, I can share with my family and even after that it sets me for life if I'm careful and invest wisely… I'm just so pleased that he even thought of me. Though I do wonder why he's passed money to us…"

"You Gryffindors are strange," Pansy said as they started walking again. "One gets angry over receiving such a gift, and the other doesn't get angry for not getting the same amount… If it were a Slytherin, you can bet there would be a feud started because of the different amounts."

"But that's stupid. How can you fight over a gift?" Pansy just shrugged and they continued to walk on. "I hope Harry isn't back yet. It'd be best to give Hermione some time to calm down."

"I agree."

Unfortunately for Harry, he and the others returned just then and with the help of a spell, Hermione immediately found him and started to chase him around the Entrance Hall of the manor, throwing very strong stinging hexes at him. Some of the hexes actually hit their mark, causing great amusement to all who was in the Manor as Harry continuously yelped out in pain and tried scrambling away from her.

"YOU BLOODY IDIOT! HOW COULD YOU DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS WITHOUT CONSULTING ME?"
"Mione, stop! If you're gonna get mad at someone, point your wand at Sirius! He gave me more money!"

"What the hell is wrong with Gryffindors? Its only money… I don't understand," Pansy repeated. All the Slytherins made sounds of agreement. Sirius stood back and just grinned, aware that all this was his fault.

"Draco! Do something!" Harry yelled as he slid across the Entrance Hall for the third time. But Draco was content to stand back with Sirius and watch. He briefly wondered how much money Harry had given Hermione to cause this reaction from her.

"Shouldn't we stop her?" Ozemir asked his partner. "Technically, she's hurting him… And we are supposed to be protecting him."

"I would advise you to let Hermione take out her anger," Severus said after overhearing this. "Harry knew what her reaction would be. Besides, she wouldn't really hurt him."

"Oww! Hermione, you vicious witch! I'm bloody bleeding now!" Harry stopped and stared at his shoulder in shock. It wasn't a deep cut… but still!

"You were saying, human?" Brumek said to Severus and then stepped in front of Hermione as she was taking aim again. "You will cease with your attacking. I can't allow you to hurt him anymore."

"And who are you?" Hermione's anger immediately disappeared after noticing the being in front of her. The tall form, pointy ears… oh, and the muscles! How could she concentrate on her anger when there was something to learn and someone so pretty to stare at?

"My name is Brumek. *Ukatae* warrior. That is all you need to know. Have you finished your revenge?"

"Are you serious?" he certainly sounded serious.

"He's nothing but serious, I promise," Ozemir replied, leaning to the side and peering at her from around Brumek's arm. He gave her a warm cheerful smile.

Hermione took one look at him and her eyes widened in appreciation and a burning desire to learn. "Of course I've finished with Harry. But you! You must tell me more! Where do you come from? How many more *Ukatae* are there?" Draco groaned along with Severus and watched as she began to pat herself down looking for her journal. "Bloody hell... Just a minute. I'll be right back!" She turned on her heels and ran off up the stairs.

"You should leave, disappear, or whatever it is you do while we're at home. She'll hound you otherwise," Severus told the two *Ukatae* before he turned and walked after Hermione.

Harry recovered his breath and shot a look of loathing towards his mate. "I'll be sleeping alone tonight." He rubbed his hand across his shoulder where he'd been cut and licked the blood off as he walked away. He couldn't believe Hermione had hit him with a minor cutting hex! And Draco had just stood there! Harry quickened his pace and was out of sight in no time.

*You really think so, Potter?* Draco ignored all the amused looks aimed his way and slowly walked after his mate.

*I wouldn't have said it if I didn't mean it.* Harry's tone was very cold. It would have made any other man shiver, but it did just the opposite for Draco. His silver eyes gleamed in delight in the dim light of the hallway.
You think you can keep me away from you, lover?

Try me.

I don't know why you're so angry. Did you really think I was going to put myself in front of an angry Hermione?

There was no verbal response, but Draco suddenly doubled over from a mental punch to his gut. And again, instead of pissing Draco off, it did the exact opposite. His laughter carried on through the halls. That hurt, Harry. Seriously. I didn't know we could beat each other up that way... Draco frowned when there was no response again, not even a mental twinge. This made Draco frown. Was Harry really ignoring him? Did he honestly think they were going to sleep separately?

Draco arrived at their bedroom. It seemed so natural to call it their bedroom, when for seventeen years it had always been his. But once Harry had started to live at the manor, Draco never thought of the room as anything but theirs. These thoughts made him smile, until he saw Harry was not there and realized his mate had been serious.

Harry? No response. Harry...C'mon. Still no response. Now the silence was getting annoying. Know what? Fine! I didn't want you anyway!

Upon hearing the mental gasp, Draco knew he'd messed up. He'd forgotten how sensitive Harry was about certain things. And being rejected by those he loved was at the top of that list. Harry, lover... Don't take it like that!

Fuck you, Malfoy.

Draco would have preferred a little heat behind the words, but there had been nothing. Harry had spoken softly, too softly, and without any emotion. And with his extra sensitive hearing he heard from somewhere within the manor Harry Apparating away. Draco immediately tried to Apparate to where Harry had gone, but only ended back in their room. He realized Harry had closed his mind off and there would be no way for Draco to Apparate straight to him. Draco stormed across his room and threw open the door and shouted for whichever Ukatae was supposed to be watching him. He wasn't too surprised that it was Ozemir.

"And why aren't you surprised?" Ozemir asked when Draco said this.

"Because it's clear Brumek doesn't trust you to go on your own. There is less chance of anything happening here."

Ozemir kept the painful emotion he felt from hearing the young one's words off his face and schooled his features to remain impassive. Internally he was bellowing his frustrations out. The warrior was even turning away the trust of the young ones. "I see," he replied and stepped back a bit. If he wasn't going to be trusted by the young ones then there was no need to try and form a bond with them. If the young ones didn't trust him he wouldn't be one of their guardians for very much longer.

Draco raised an eyebrow and looked interested upon seeing Ozemir's closed off look. "So there is more to you than the disgustingly cheerful Scholar... I knew it! You were beginning to worry me. Because there has to be a dark side to you, right? We are dark creatures..."

You have no idea how Dark I am, Ozemir thought to himself. "Did you need something, young one?"

"I only wanted to make sure Harry didn't run off to somewhere dangerous."
"He is with Brumek and will not come to any harm. That is a promise." Ozemir's smile was just like always, but it seemed cracked a little to Draco.

"Brumek is the only one who doesn't see that you are useful. You shouldn't let him get to you," Draco said conversationally and leaned against the door frame. Now that he was sure Brumek had followed Harry, he didn't have to worry about his mate's safety and it would probably be best to let Harry cool down a bit. "I trust you," he told the Scholar.

"Why?"

"Because you volunteered to go rescue Hermione before your leader chose you. You've also grown on me, and because Harry likes you."

Ozemir's stiff smile softened as he looked upon Draco. "You really love your mate, don't you?"

Draco looked surprised. "Of course. We are soul mates. Isn't that how all Ukatae mate? By finding soul mates?"

Ozemir began to laugh, his rich velvety voice floating down the hallway and around them. From some ways down, a door opened and Sirius popped his head out. He stared at Ozemir while the Ukatae laughed, until a naked Lucius jerked his husband back inside by slipping a blue silk rope around Sirius' naked torso and pulling him back in and then Lucius promptly slammed the door shut.

"I really didn't need to see that," Draco muttered while rubbing the vision of both Sirius and his father's naked forms out of his eyes. "Can't they even make it to their own room before doing… that?"

Ozemir pouted. "You all get to have so much fun. It's really not fair."

"Whatever." Draco waved that away. "I'm interested now. Tell me how you find mates." He stepped back to allow Ozemir inside. "I promise not to tell anyone you've talked to me about it."

"All right then." Ozemir passed into the room with a bounce and a smile. Draco shook his head as he shut the door. Ozemir really was almost like a child.

They took seats next to the fireplace where the small fire cast them in an orange glow. Ozemir got comfortable and then began to speak. "It is rare for any being to find their soul mates and since there are so few Ukatae left and so much turmoil within our race, finding our soul mate is almost impossible. However, we do have a destined mate and we mate for life."

Draco was silent for a moment, thinking about that. "That sounds like soul mates to me."

"Sometimes, for some couples, it is almost the same, but not quite. You and Harry are rivals in a way, and yet you complement each other perfectly. You are each other's strength… Your hearts and souls are the same… You are one. It's hard to explain, but a destined life mate is not the same."

"Does that mean you are not guaranteed to love your mate? You have to be stuck with someone Fate picks, even if you don't love them?"

Ozemir nibbled on his lip a moment, looking off. "You can love someone with your whole heart even if they aren't your soul mate. Take your father and his husband for instance." He turned back to Draco. "Their love is just as strong as you and your mate but they aren't soul mates. And Harry's uncle and his witch, they aren't soul mates… yet they love just like you do. They are destined mates, though who knows if it will last for life. Humans are surely different."
"You're talking about them on purpose! Stop putting images in my head!" Draco scowled upon seeing the guilty smile on Ozemir's face. "So how do you find mates then?"

Ozemir's smile decreased a fraction. "Before the fall of our Empire, our kind held frequent Laennan Amai. These are festivals or extravagant social parties held specifically for introducing eligible mates to each other. Laennan Amai were held every three months all over the Empire… But these are no longer held… No one has mate bonded in four hundred years. This is due to the decrease in our population and to the fact that we no longer live as close together as we used to… the fact that we are being punished by our Mother." Ozemir turned and looked at the fire. "Our race is dying, young one. I remember when our Empire rivaled that of humans…." Ozemir stared into the fire with a far off look in his eyes. "A long time ago," he whispered.

"Hold on!" Draco sat forward, his eyes gone wide. "How old are you? You were alive during the beginning of the war? Hermione said that happened five hundred years ago."

"It's rude to ask someone their age."

"Tell me," Draco prodded, his silver eyes flashing with intense curiosity.

Ozemir flashed him a mischievous grin. "Didn't you realize, Draco? We are immortal."

"But you just said our race is dying!"

"We are immortal but we can also be killed, and we are still killing each other. The war still wages on… Without the Royal caste I'm afraid nothing will ever be resolved."

Draco was having a hard time letting the fact that he could now live forever sink into his brain. It was a very weird thought, and he wasn't sure if he was pleased with this discovery. "But you must have some governing system now," Draco ventured after a short silence. He didn't want to think about the immortality aspect of the Ukatae and talking about something else would clear away the buzzing in his head.

"We have the Council and they do their best. But they are not the Royal Council. We Ukatae are beings of power and we need to be ruled by one governing power, else we're ruled by nothing but chaos." Ozemir looked into Draco's eyes, making sure he had the young one's complete attention. "The Council is never really taken seriously after a period of time and this is because its members are always changing. Mostly because they've been assassinated or because they aren't strong enough to hold such a position for very long. In order to rule the Ukatae, one must be strong. In power and physical strength. Only those with Royal blood had that kind of supremacy. And now… Hirsha will never allow us peace without the Royal Clan. Our Goddess, our Mother, rightly punishes us for destroying the Royal family and I fear there will always be blood and chaos until we have completely destroyed ourselves."

"You were there when the royal blood was spilt? Did you help in their deaths?" Draco knew such a question would probably not be answered, but he was curious to know, especially since Ozemir's voice was very regretful when speaking about the late rulers.

Ozemir ignored the question and suddenly stood, giving Draco a dismissive smile. "I'll leave you alone now."

Draco hadn't expected an answer so he wasn't put out at not receiving one. "Wait, I want to give you something." He stood and headed for the door. Ozemir obediently followed him out of the room and down into the dungeons.
"This place is awful! Tell your father he should do something about this."

"It's a dungeon. It's not supposed to be nice." They passed all the opened cells and came upon the roomed cells for people who weren't exactly prisoners, but who weren't exactly free either. Draco waved his hand and disabled the wards before opening the door. "And anyway, this is what I wanted to give you." He sneered at his aunt who sat at a small wooden table staring down at it with wide crazed eyes. The small room contained simply the table and chair she was using, a small cot, and through a door across the way, a small bathroom.

"Ah… young one," Ozemir smiled apologetically at Draco who knew what was about to be said. "First of all, I don't do humans… and secondly, in case you missed it, I prefer males."

Draco snorted. "If I missed it then I would have to be sightless and brainless. No, you said you wanted blood. She can give you blood. It's your choice whether you want to use her or not."

Bellatrix stared for a moment wide-eyed at the two Ukatae studying her. She then quickly stood up and hastily moved back to press herself into the darkened corner beside her bed when she heard what they were speaking about. "Stay away from me! My master will not be pleased if you touch me!"

"You've already been told a hundred times, Lestrange! You're Harry's now! The Dark Lord does not want you and cares nothing about what happens to you. You are ours to do with what we please. Now shut up!"

Ozemir sensed the witch's fear and smelt her blood, and his mouth began to water. "I do like magical blood… but…"

"I will not say a word." Draco grinned at his cowering relative. "Please, don't be gentle with her."

He turned and walked away leaving an indecisive Scholar behind.

When Ozemir turned back to look at the witch with the crazed eyes, he smiled and she whimpered. His indecision quickly vanishing. The human's fear swirled around him like gusty wind and that was almost as intoxicating as the scent of her blood.

Ozemir stepped into the room, shut the door behind him, and bared his fangs. "Who am I to refuse a gift?" he purred, his eyes already turning a blood red color.

Hermione raced back to her room and grabbed her Ukatae journal and a muggle pen. She was just about to run back out into the hallway when Severus swooped in and shut the door quietly behind him. He stood and stared at her for a moment, noting the wild hair and excited light in her eyes at the prospect of learning more about the Ukatae. The side of his mouth quirked up.

"They are gone now. You'll have to interrogate them another time." He nearly laughed when Hermione's shoulders dropped and her smile faded.

"But I wanted to-"

"There will be another time. I don't think they'll be going anywhere for some time. It seems these Ukatae are here as some sort of guard for Harry and Draco. From what I gather, they are here to stay."

Hermione frowned before turning around and heading straight for the desk. She sat down, opened the journal and immediately began to write in it. Her hand flashed back and forth across the page as she wrote everything she could remember about the new Ukatae. Severus couldn't believe how fast she was writing, and that she was actually putting down coherent words.
"What are you doing now?" he swept passed the desk and stood to look out the window, though it was dark outside and nothing much to see.

"Writing down the description of the Ukatae who spoke to me. I want to remember everything!"

"Your quest for knowledge really is insatiable. You should think about resting."

"I've rested enough." She looked up and studied him. "Severus?" When he turned around and raised an eyebrow, she suddenly felt very embarrassed. "I'm sorry I missed our date."

For a moment, Severus merely looked at her, trying to make up his mind whether he'd heard her correctly or not. Was she really apologizing for missing the date? She was apologizing for something that had been completely out of her control? For Merlin's sake! The woman had been kidnapped! He couldn't help but feel like throttling her and crushing her in his arms at the same time. Instead he took on an indifferent look.

"It's to be expected," he drawled condescendingly. "When you have your nose always stuck in a book, it's hard to sense the danger lurking around every corner. That's why you are always getting into trouble. I'm really not surprised."

Severus had to bite the inside of his cheek to keep from laughing when her mouth dropped open. He stood over her looking every bit like the snarky Potions Master he was. He was even sneering and looking down his nose at her as if she were a bug. Because he knew it would piss her off.

Hermione threw her pen down and shot up from her chair. "Look here, you bas-

Her words were suddenly muffled when Severus' hand embedded itself into her wild hair and forcibly drew her against his body so that her face pressed against his chest. He further surprised her by wrapping his arm around her back and held her tightly against him and dropped his cheek onto the top of her head. Hermione could feel the fast beating of his heart against his chest. Instead of saying anything more, she encircled her arms around his waist and took a deep breath. She smelt all sorts of things on him, but the strongest scents were sandalwood and soap, a strong masculine scent that had her heart suddenly beating very fast as well. Severus didn't say anything as he continued to rest his cheek on the top of her head and stroke her hair, but Hermione understood him well enough to know he was showing her just how relieved he was that she was safe, relatively unharmed and back with him. And this made her smile brightly against his chest.

"Moody is dead."

Hermione sighed. "You really know how to spoil a good mood."

She pulled away a bit and looked up into black orbs watching her curiously. He had reminded her of everything that had happened that day, and she felt her assurance shrinking to minuscule proportions. She had killed today, taken three lives… Something she hadn't really prepared herself for. She knew maybe one day taking a life would be necessary, but… Hermione hadn't counted on that day being today.

Severus saw the uncertainty and her fear and wariness wash over her. The instinct to soothe and protect washed over him. It was a new feeling for him, one he wasn't used to. But he was gradually becoming accustomed to it and when it came to Hermione, he began to enjoy it as well. He pulled her over to a chair and sat down, and looked at her with a quirked eyebrow. Hermione gave him a shy smile but did not move. Severus rolled his eyes and tugged her down into his lap and cradled her in his arms.
"Do you think I'm evil? I've killed now, Severus. Do you think less of me?"

Severus was grateful she was the one bringing it up. He had wanted to. Known she would need reassurance, but he didn't know how to begin. He knew very well how to finish though. "Don't be stupid. Look who you are talking to. I've taken lives as well... taken great pleasure in some of those killings. Does that make you want to get away from me?"

"No. It's who you are. I didn't choose you blindly, Severus." This answer surprised and pleased Severus to the point that he was almost speechless.

"You like the fact that I can be a cold bastard?" he was finally able to ask. "The fact that I have blood on my hands?" When Hermione blushed and silently nodded, Severus' grip around her tightened and he nearly groaned. "Why would you think I'd feel differently about you if you had to get your hands dirty?"

"I don't know. It's just how I feel."

"Is there a way to explain what makes a person evil?" he finally asked after they'd sat for some time in comfortable silence. "Is there really a set definition for the word? Do you believe Harry and Draco are evil now that they are *Ukatae*; dark creatures that would slaughter a person without remorse? You have only seen them kill the sacrifice for Tom's revival, but I assure you, those two will enjoy the darker aspects of their personas now. When they've truly connected with what they are."

"They would never kill an innocent person, Severus."

Severus snorted. "I believe it depends on the level of innocence, Hermione. I have no doubt you may be surprised in the future about what they will do."

Hermione's brows drew together, and he could see her denial of his words. And then he could see her uncertainty. He was grateful when it was apparent she was going to push that line of talk away for another time. "No," she finally said. "I don't think they are evil. Even if they may enjoy killing. I know they would never lose themselves completely to the darkness."

Severus refrained from voicing his doubts on that and instead he leaned back and closed his eyes, a small smile played at the corners of his mouth as he remembered what he'd seen of her Pensieve memory. "You were very strong. You had to do what was needed to keep yourself and your idiot friends from being killed. You, Lovegood, Thomas, and Longbottom... all of you surprised me. You worked as a team, even when injured... I have to admit though, you and Lovegood surprised me most of all. Lovegood..."

"That was just strange!" Hermione exclaimed, pulling away from his chest and looked at him with wide eyes, remembering everything Luna had done. "Do you think she really doesn't remember she did it, or is she pretending? Maybe to protect herself?"

"I can't even start to guess. And at this point I don't want to talk about that." Severus' arm tightened around her waist and pulled her against his chest again. "My question is, how did you feel when you were cursing those bastards?" he purred against her ear and then he pulled back slightly so that he could watch her carefully, his black eyes bright with appreciation. Hermione quickly looked away and cleared her throat.

"I don't know what you mean... I had no time to think about anything except escaping."

Severus' long fingers caressed her face before he forced her to look at him. "Don't lie to me, witch. Draco showed me what happened with Karkaroff. You enjoyed torturing him. You enjoyed torturing
the wizard at the muggle building too…” Severus lifted her chin until their eyes were locked. "I saw
the pleasure it gave you. Don't deny it. Your pleasure was also my pleasure. I quite enjoy a dark
Hermione Granger."

Hermione shifted until she was straddling him and she leaned in until their noses were nearly
touching. "You're not upset that I didn't turn out to be some pure goody Gryffindor witch? I've heard
bad boys like good girls."

Severus looked disgusted with the thought. "Perish the thought! In fact, I think I want to go watch
the memory of Karkaroff again… or we can go down to the dungeons and you can practice on
Lestrange." He pinned her with a smoldering gaze that made Hermione's breath catch in her throat.

"Or maybe we can practice something else," she whispered shyly, but her eyes were determined.
Hermione grabbed onto her nerve and held tight before she could lose it, and began to unbutton the
jacket of his business suit. When all the buttons were undone, she pushed it off his shoulders before
immediately working on his dress shirt. Severus said nothing as he watched her undress him, his
gaze never wavering from her flushed face.

"You look amazing in this business suit, Severus. You should keep it." She pulled his white dress
shirt opened and just stared. She'd known he had a nice body because every time they embraced she
could feel his form through his robes. But she never expected Severus to have a body that looked
like a twenty-year-old Quidditch player! Where the hell did a Potion Master get muscle like this?

"You see something you like?" His eyes danced with amusement when she continued to stare at his
chest with that appreciative glint in her eyes. Hermione smirked and then dipped her head to run a
hot wet tongue along the curve of his neck before leaving sweet little kisses under his chin, over his
jaw, until her lips came to hover over his. Severus didn't make a sound, but she knew he was
affected by the way he clenched his jaw, and by the long hardness pressing up between her legs.
Hermione shifted and moaned when Severus suddenly grabbed her hips, and he thrust up against
her.

"Hermione, I want you to be sure…” Severus whispered against the softness of her neck as he
breathed in her scent. Severus moaned this time when Hermione began to shift her hips back and
forth over him. Even though he was still wearing pants, he could feel the immense heat pooling
against him from between her legs.

"Do we need to go over this again?” she asked; her fingers playing a little dance over his chest, and
she smiled when Severus trembled under her hand. Severus closed the distance, brushing his lips
against hers. Her lips were like soft petals against his and her small little gasps of pleasure spurred
him on to take the kiss deeper, one hand cupping the back of her neck, and she moaned when his
tongue slipped between those petal lips. Severus' tongue caressed her mouth as his fingers caressed
her shoulders, back, neck... anywhere he could touch. She gasped when the fingers she'd dreamt so
much about suddenly brushed over a hardened nipple.

Severus pulled a fraction away from her mouth. "Are you a virgin?” he asked, his silky voice full of
wanting, his warm hand heavy on her breast. Hermione leaned into the palm and he flexed his
fingers and it was a moment before his words penetrated the haze of pleasure clouding her brain.

When his words registered, she became surprised and embarrassed, and she wasn't sure how to
respond. What was his reaction going to be when she told him she wasn't a virgin? That she allowed
that creep Ronald to touch her first? She didn't think she could stand to see the disgust she knew she
would see on Severus' face when she answered the question.

"I don't want to say. Would it matter to you? Does it matter?” she whispered.
"It matters."

Hermione nodded and climbed off his lap, surprising Severus with the saddened look on her face. "I'm not a virgin." She turned away from him and pulled her robe back on. There was a cloud of dejection looming over her as she moved away and prepared to be rejected.

"Give me the man's name and current address," Severus hissed as he slowly stood up. Because she wasn't facing him, Hermione thought he was serious and she missed the mischievous glint in his eyes as he moved towards her.

"It was one time and I'm pained to admit it was with Ron, but I thought we… I thought he was a good person. Had I known-" A strong arm encircled her waist and a hand once again rested over her breast. She shuddered when his dark voice murmured into her ear.

"He was the only one then?" she nodded. "Then to me you are still a virgin. I do not expect a boy, a brat to have seen to your pleasure. I'm sure you were left wanting. A man knows how to make love to a woman, and I guarantee you it is very different from what you experienced. I only ask because I want to know just how much I can teach you tonight, witch. I will not hold back anymore. There is no going back," he finished before running his tongue along her earlobe, sending her body into sensory overload. Severus grinned. Seems he found one of her more sensitive spots.

"Severus, please." Hermione tilted her head back when she felt his lips on her neck drawing in her scent as if it were the only thing that could sustain his soul. She felt her robe once again slide from her shoulders to pool onto the floor at her feet. She closed her eyes and began to tremble when a hand brushed against her thigh, pulling the nightgown up so that he could slip his hand underneath it. Hermione gasped when he brushed against the heat between her thighs and she moved against him, against those fingers.

Severus groaned and pressed completely against her back, and closed his eyes. She was so wet. For him. She was moving against his fingers, moaning for more… This wasn't what he'd planned on doing tonight. He'd planned to talk with her, make sure she was emotionally all right and see her off to bed before returning to his home. It had been that damn look in her eyes when she'd had that journal in her hands. The look of world discovery. And then when they'd talked about what happened that day, the Pensieve memories swung and hit his cock straight on. "I don't want to stop," he breathed into her ear once more.

"Don't. Don't stop. Show me everything." Severus was only too happy to oblige her.

Harry appeared in the empty side street beside the building Dumbledore and Moody had been using in London. With a surly scowl on his face, he stalked out and stood on the side walk. Before leaving the manor, Harry had shrouded himself in a black cloak, though he still wore his muggle clothes underneath. The black cloak was to hide his appearance so that he wouldn't have to glamour himself. He wanted his relatives to see exactly who he was now.

Harry sighed and stared up into the sky and frowned when he couldn't see the stars. The sky was lit too bright by all the city lights for him to be able to see anything. It was disappointing. He was in the mood to see the natural night sky. He shook himself, reminded that he came here for a purpose and wouldn't allow himself to think about other things until he was finished.

"Where is the place where you found my friends?" he asked the air beside him.

"Follow." Brumek appeared and Harry was surprised to see he'd changed himself to look human. Brumek looked like himself except he had two human ears and his hair was short and spiky, though
Harry thought it looked cool because he'd kept it black with the natural blood red streaks running through it. He was wearing dark pants and a black long sleeved shirt, and best of all, a long black leather coat. Harry wanted that coat.

Harry followed silently because he was sure Brumek did not want to talk. He never did. He was as solid, strong, and silent as a stone statue that one. Harry smirked, remembering all the times Ozemir got under his companion's skin. It was really very funny, that relationship.

All too soon they arrived in front of his aunt and cousin's door, and for a moment, Harry thought about turning around and leaving. Did he really want to see them again? He didn't know. Seeing them again would bring back the pain of his past, he would remember everything, all the pain they put him through. Sighing, and feeling the twinge of panic from such thoughts, he stepped back from the door before turning away and running a hand through his hair in exasperation before looking at Brumek. "I suppose you think I'm acting like a coward."

"I don't know who these people are, but I can feel your trepidation. They are only humans, young one. I do wonder what they have done to make you feel so ill at ease. And no, I don't think you are being cowardly. Take your time and think about what you want to do. Though why you would want to see any more humans is beyond me." Brumek sneered at the door and his attitude actually lightened Harry's mood enough that he made the young Ukatae laugh.

"I grew up with them." Harry turned back to the door. "It wasn't a good home to live in for me."

"Of course not. They are human."

Harry supposed he'd have to see Aunt Petunia and Dudley to know if he could actually forgive them. Harry realized he would like to forgive but wasn't sure that was possible. The least he could do was thank them for looking after his friends when they certainly didn't need to. Harry stepped back up to the door and prepared to knock.

"Douse your Ukatae traits, young one. We usually do not show our true selves to humans."

Harry dropped his hand and scowled at Brumek. "I have a name," he reminded as he dropped the hood of his cloak. "Why must you refer to me as young one?" as he spoke, he put a glamour on his ears and shortened his fangs, immediately obeying even though he hadn't planned on using a glamour. "Will you come in with me?" he asked once the changes were completed.

"I go where you go, young one." This time Brumek smirked at him.

Harry sighed. "No, I meant as you are now. Without disappearing into your shadow thing."

Brumek nodded and stood beside Harry at the door and before Harry could do anything, Brumek began pounding on the door.

"Not so loud!" he hissed at the warrior. "People might think you're trying to break in or something."

The door opened almost immediately, which surprised Harry so much that he would have stepped back had Brumek not put a restraining hand on his back. Petunia Dursley paled upon seeing her nephew and the man beside him.

"Har…Harry…" she stammered. "Oh Lord! You're not here to kill us are you?" she clutched her skinny hands to her chest and stared wide eyed at him.

"No, Aunt Petunia. I've come to talk. May we come in?"
"To talk?" Petunia began to blink rapidly, and Harry was surprised to feel grief when he saw her eyes were filling with tears. "Yes! Yes, please come in!" She moved aside to allow the two visitors to enter. "Shall I get Dudley?"

"Yes. I wish to speak with him as well." Harry moved forward and sat in the chair next to the couch and Brumek took a standing position behind his chair and watched the human with cold unwavering eyes. Petunia rushed out of the room and Harry heard her knocking on a door down the hallway. Harry took deep breaths to calm himself and waited for his aunt and cousin to join him.

Petunia returned very quickly and Dudley lumbered after her more slowly. Dudley had a look of fear and anticipation on his face, which Harry thought strange. But he cracked a small smile when he finally saw Harry.

"Hello, Harry."

"Dudley." If his family thought he would suddenly be all nice, warm, and fuzzy with them, then they had another thing coming.

"How are your friends?"

"They are fine. That's one of the reasons why I came. Thank you for taking them in. You didn't have to look after them." Harry's blank face then produced a frown. "I want to know why you did."

Dudley and his mother sat on the couch; each shooting fearful glances at the man standing behind Harry before looking back at him.

"They needed help and I was there," Dudley said with a shrug.

"That doesn't explain anything, Dudley. Since when have you cared about helping anyone, huh? You never helped me when Vernon was beating the life out of me… I know you wouldn't have cared if I died."

"That's not true," Petunia said firmly with a frown. "We didn't understand you, so we feared you. But Dudley and I never wanted you dead. That was never what we wanted."

"Then why did you let that fat bastard beat me all the time?" Harry ground out between clenched teeth. Behind him, Brumek shifted at his words and only Harry heard the soft enraged growl emitting from the elder Ukatae's throat.

"Mum was really scared of Dad, Harry. She really was-"

"Dudley…" Petunia began to shake her head.

"No! He needs to hear this and understand why we did things. I'm not trying to make up for what we did, because Mum and I were just as bad as Dad, me especially. But he constantly threatened Mum, Harry! And after you were taken away by your, uh, boyfriend… Then Dad started to hit Mum."

"For clarification, Draco is my fiancé now." Harry ignored their gob smacked expressions. "And what about you, Dudders?" he couldn't stop himself from jibing his cousin just a little, and was pleased when Dudley's face turned red with anger. "You made my life hell. You were almost as bad as Vernon."

Dudley calmed himself before he spoke. "Yeah, I was. I was awful to you. I was stupid and only wanted to please him. I never thought about anything except pleasing my father, so I took on his hate of you… but I swear, I'm truly sorry for what I ever did to you and I wish I could take it back."
"You seem more intelligent." That was the only thing Harry could think to say, and he distinctly heard Brumek snort behind him.

"Somebody told me to grow up, and I have."

Harry nodded, somewhat pleased, and then he whipped out his wand, scaring the shite out of his relatives. "I'm not going to curse you." He stood up and crossed the room to Dudley. "Here." He extended his wand out to the pale boy. Dudley stared at the wand stupidly for a minute and then slowly reached for it. "Hurry up, will you! It's not going to bite."

Dudley grabbed the wand before staring up at his cousin. "Blimey, Harry, you've grown!"

"Yeah, finally." Harry stepped aside, an odd emotion going through him at hearing Dudley call him by name. "Now wave the wand around."

Dudley was uncertain and looked at his mother, who nodded. Dudley swished the wand around and massive sparks exploded from the end causing the television and a vase to explode and sending Petunia into a screaming fit. Luckily Brumek was quick and cast a shield around everyone protecting them from the flying shards. Harry was impressed Brumek had thought to shield Petunia and Dudley as well, knowing how much the Ukatae warrior despised humans.

Harry quickly took his wand back and tucked it back into the waistband of his pants. "Yeah, you're definitely a wizard." He went to sit back down and studied his face. "You don't look surprised."

"That woman who put her hands all over my Dudders told him." Petunia sniffed indignantly. Harry's eyebrows rose upon this and of seeing Dudley blush.

"Mum…"

"Well I don't understand what she thought she was doing touching you like that!"

"What woman?"

"A tall blonde wearing a black party dress. She came with that wizard. With Mr. Snape."

"Ozemir!" snapped Brumek.

"She told me I was a wizard. She also said that I needed to shape up or I would die and that she would help me. That's why she rubbed me down," Dudley said to Petunia. "Said it would help me lose weight, but only if I started exercising. I went out jogging as soon as your friends left."

"I will kill him." Brumek was now growling and it was clear the man behind Harry was not human by the sounds he was making. Harry turned around and flashed Brumek a grin.

"Harry, would you mind introducing us to your friend?" Petunia finally asked, unable to hold out on her curiosity any longer. The man looked dangerous and his bulk seemed to make the small living space even smaller with him in the room.

Harry simply shrugged. "This is Brumek. He's my bodyguard of sorts."

Dudley looked impressed and grinned. "Why do you have to go around with a bodyguard?"

"They haven't said yet, but I assume it's because of what I am and who I am…" Harry responded thoughtfully, remembering Tu'ral's words about he and Draco being important to the future of Ukatae kind. Harry shifted to look at Brumek, but he wasn't given any indication he was correct
"What you are? You are speaking about what your fiancé told us… that you aren't human anymore, correct?" Petunia ventured carefully. Harry was surprised to see she actually looked curious and not disgusted at all. Harry wasn't sure why, but her reaction was pissing him off. Not to mention that he felt like he had fallen into a parallel universe.

"Have you finally accepted me?" he asked lowly in anger.

"Oh, Harry. We were prejudiced and ignorant… I blame my jealousy and bitterness. I do accept you and hope you accept my sincere regret at having treated you so badly and for not standing up to Vernon sooner. As your aunt, I should have protected you."

"Same for me. I can't really continue to think the way I used to if I'm a wizard as well." Dudley put in.

Harry jumped to his feet. "Can you still accept me when you know I'm no longer human? Can you accept me like this?" Harry dropped his glamour and waited while his relatives looked upon him with wide eyes.

"Does no one listen to what I say?" Brumek grumbled. "Didn't I say we do not show ourselves to humans?"

"Well?" Harry fumed as he raised his arms out to his sides as Dudley and Petunia stared at him slack jawed. He was already worked up and believed they would shun him yet again because he obviously looked anything but human. His aunt's next words, however, slammed surprise into him and all at once took the fluster and anger right out of him.

"Would you and your bodyguard like some tea, Harry?"

Draco sat at his desk for half an hour, debating on whether or not he should go after Harry. In the end, he decided not to, knowing Harry probably needed some time alone and eventually the idiot Gryffindor would realize he'd overreacted. Harry knew he loved him, knew he would do anything for him, especially to see him happy. Besides, maybe a night away from each other might be good. Draco didn't see why or for what reason, but he was sticking with that thought as he readied for bed.

"But we've always been able to upset each other by mere words since day one," Draco muttered thirty minutes later. He was lying on his back, wide-eyed, and completely awake and he knew it would be impossible to get to sleep without his mate. It might have been easier to gain sleep without Harry if he wasn't so worried that Harry was in a world of depression over his admittedly stupid comment. "I suppose it's perfectly reasonable that he should react the way he did. It was a careless remark on my part."

Draco got up when he realized sleep would not come to him without his mate and put on the same muggle clothes he'd been wearing earlier. He went out into the hall and called Ozemir, knowing the Scholar would hear him no matter where he was within the manor. The Ukatae in question appeared almost immediately and was still licking the blood off his lips when he arrived.

"You just now left her?" Draco asked incredulously, his eyes wide in surprise. Ozemir grinned and nodded. "Merlin. Is she still alive? I didn't mean for you to suck her dry. Harry's gonna kill me! She's supposed to be his kill!"

Ozemir laughed lowly. "Do not worry. I left a few drops. She'll awake in a few days."
Ozemir's eyes still gleamed bright red and he was grinning wickedly. Draco fought the urge to move away as he was pinned with those eyes. He watched silently as the red color cleared until he was looking into violet eyes once again.

"Take me to my mate."

Ozemir frowned at this order. "I was under the assumption your mate wanted to be left alone."

Draco sighed. He really hated to admit this weakness. "I can't sleep without him," he grumbled and then he glared when Ozemir began to snicker. "And I suppose I want to apologize for my flippant remark. Will you take me? Or show me how to find him? I understand there are ways for you to track other Ukatae."

"Well, yes. Of course there are." Ozemir placed a hand on his cocked hip and stared at something over Draco's shoulder. "But it is not something as easy as when you transfer yourself from one place to another. It takes many different levels of concentration when looking for someone. I do not have permission to start teaching you two the Shadow technique yet, but... I'll take you within my Shadow now to find Harry."

Ozemir shifted into his Shadow form and told Draco to walk into it. When Draco did he shivered from the cold of something that felt like mist and felt powerful magic swirling around his body, squeezing tight around him almost to the point of cutting off his circulation. He felt Ozemir place a hand on his shoulder and squeeze.

"I know it feels strange, and it will feel that way the first few times. Just breathe naturally."

Draco nodded, but wasn't sure Ozemir could see him, as Draco couldn't see anything except for the shadow around him. He had just barely finished nodding when the Shadow was lifted and he found himself standing in a crème colored hallway lined with six door on each side of the hall.

Draco was impressed. "That was fast."

"Ah! This is where we found your friends! It's this one." Ozemir pointed the door with the number twenty-nine on it. Draco wasn't really surprised Harry had decided to visit his relatives.

"Shadow us in, Ozemir."

"That would be quite rude," Ozemir chastised and wagged a finger in a no no gesture.

"These people don't deserve politeness. Shadow us in," Draco ordered.

"Brumek and Harry will immediately know we are within the domicile once we pass through the door, if Brumek doesn't already sense us." Draco stared blankly at him with an 'I don't care' look. "You certainly are highbred, aren't you, young one," Ozemir chuckled and dissolved them through the door.

Draco stepped out of the darkened corner into an empty living room, but he immediately heard voices coming from the nearby doorway. He took a couple of steps to the side to peer through the doorway into the kitchen where the voices were coming from. He spotted Brumek first. The Ukatae stood at attention behind a chair facing away from the doorway, but he was looking over his shoulder at Draco, and then his eyes flicked over Draco's shoulder to scowl at Ozemir who remained behind in the corner within his Shadow. Draco thought this strange. Ozemir was always up to causing disturbances and talking to humans. He thought it probably had something to do with Brumek. Draco then ignored those two and turned back and wondered why Harry hadn't sensed him yet. What could possibly be so important to have Harry miss the scent of his mate? He concentrated
on the conversation and realized Harry and his aunt were discussing her family and how Dudley could have turned out to be a wizard.

"So you and my mother came from the same orphanage, and both of you came from magical families…" Harry was saying.

"That's right. But I was a… what is it you call a person with no magic from a magical family?"

"A Squib." That would explain why Petunia had been jealous of her sister. It was said the Evans praised Lily all the time for her gift, and were proud to have a witch in the family. Petunia must have really felt left out. Harry could understand that. "Did Dudley receive a Hogwarts letter as well? I never saw one."

"No. And I'm glad he didn't." When Harry frowned his aunt shook her head. "Imagine what Vernon would have done had he known his son was a wizard as well."

"He would have killed me," Harry said, knowing it was true. "And he probably would have taken it out on you as well. Why didn't he get a letter though? And did you know he was a wizard?"

"I had no idea. And now that I know, I assume Dudley never displayed any magical abilities because of the way we raised him. He may have done things but then you were probably blamed for that."

"Did you ever feel anything?" Harry asked his cousin, who had been sitting quietly, listening to their conversation.

"No. To me magic was a disease. Subconsciously, I probably pushed all that away."

"But why now? Why is it apparent now?"

"He turned seventeen recently, correct? His abilities probably awoke on his Inheritance. It's not unheard of," Draco drawled from where he continued to stand in the living room. He raised an eyebrow when Harry nodded without turning around and nearly laughed when he realized his mate wasn't paying attention to who had spoken and had yet to realize he was there. It both amused and irritated Draco. Two reactions that Harry always seemed to be able to draw out of him.

Harry frowned and tapped his fingers on the table. Petunia and Dudley were staring into the living room watching Draco with wary gazes, but Harry missed this as well. He was very deep in thought.

"Did you feel anything when you turned seventeen? You should have felt-"

Harry suddenly spun around and nearly yelped out in surprise to find Draco standing in the middle of the living room staring back at him with a dark face that seemed to be carved out of stone. Draco's face was sort of tilted to the ground, making his hair fall over his face and hide his eyes, but Harry knew those eyes were pinned on him, could feel the glare piercing him and he shuddered from the heat, the thrill of his mate's irritation. Harry didn't need to open up his mind to know the blond was pissed off.

"Um…excuse me for a minute." He rose from his chair. "I'll come back in a minute. I want to discuss one more thing with you before I leave. I didn't mean to keep you both up. It is rather late."

"Not at all, Harry. We're glad you're here," Petunia said sincerely. She watched as Harry nodded then walked out to his lover who was frowning ferociously. What beautiful creatures they are.

Petunia coughed and blushed from her own thoughts.

"Sorry I ran off… I know I overreacted… I was being stupid." Harry smiled sheepishly and scratched the back of his neck. "Did I make you worry?"
Draco sighed and was annoyed that those few words from Harry could dissolve his anger instantly. "Of course you did, idiot Gryffindor. You closed your mind from me. How the hell did you think I would react to that?" he walked to him, and when Harry caught the look in his eyes, he shuddered. There wasn't anger there, just a soft reprimand. "And it's been confirmed. I can't sleep without you. So can we please go back home now?"

"Not yet. I haven't finished discussing things with them."

Draco sighed dramatically. He caught sight of Harry's 'aunt' watching them curiously. Harry was startled when a truly wicked gleam appeared in Draco's eyes.

"Harry." His voice was low and husky and just the right tone to make his lover shiver. "I missed you." Draco softly touched Harry's face, caressed the smooth skin and moved closer so that their chests brushed. He put a finger under Harry's chin and tipped his face up to his.

"Draco?"

On the one hand, Harry was very receptive to Draco's touch and the way his soft voice made him an almost instant puddle of goo, but on the other hand they were in the middle of his aunt's living room and he was sure his aunt and cousin were watching them. It made the whole situation entirely uncomfortable. For a moment Harry heard Ozemir softly chuckling from where he was hiding in the corner. Harry opened his mouth the tell Draco to quit what he was doing, but he couldn't make the actual words pass his lips.

"Maybe we could make her have a heart attack," Draco breathed into his ear and wrapped an arm around Harry's waist to pull him closer; shifting their bodies so that they were both perfectly visible to the occupants in the kitchen who were watching despite themselves.

Harry barely managed to keep a moan from leaving his mouth when he felt Draco's lips ghost over his jaw before tenderly sliding over his lips. As Harry's eyes closed, his mouth opened and his tongue sought out Draco's before he knew what was happening. From somewhere in the hazy distance he heard his aunt gasp, but he couldn't be bothered to care if she was having a heart attack or not. Draco's tongue against his was like a soothing balm for his conflicted emotions, and he wrapped his arms around his mate and lost himself to the soft loving embrace Draco afforded him.

Petunia was quite shocked. She had imagined she'd feel nothing but disgust at seeing two males so intimate together, and she'd had plenty of time to think upon it, but now all she felt was shock. Maybe it was because Harry and his lover were obviously very passionate with their feelings for each other, if their actions were anything to go by. The way they held each other. The way they looked and touched each other made it clear they were in love. The way the blond was holding Harry… it was clear Harry was loved unconditionally.

And Petunia wondered how anyone could think love in any form was disgusting? And even if she had been disgusted, which she wasn't, the smile Harry had on his face when he finally pulled away from that kiss would have swept away the revulsion. It was an utterly enraptured smile, one that could have brightened the darkest sky and Petunia nearly wept from seeing it. She had never seen her nephew in such a happy state and she knew that was her fault. She felt horrid for having witnessed this happiness; she didn't deserve it. Resolutely, she turned away from the two and sat back down and looked at her son. Dudley's eye were planted firmly on the table, but he must have seen what happened as his face was a very red color.

"Mum… they were just…"

"Yes, dear." Petunia rubbed his shoulder gently.
"Harry and that bloke really are… I didn't believe him when he said they were lovers."

"Seems he was telling the truth."

"Pity. She's still breathing," came a scathing voice from the doorway.

Petunia and Dudley turned just in time to see Harry jab an elbow into his fiance's side. "Be nice," Harry hissed.

Draco arched an eyebrow and studied Petunia and Dudley. "I refuse." And he commenced with the sneering.

"Then go and sit in the living room until I've finished here."

Draco gave one last scorching look at the uncomfortable humans, then turned on his heels and went to sit down in the living room sneering disdainfully at the meager and unrefined furnishings.

"My beloved, Draco Malfoy," Harry announced as he returned to his seat, waving a hand over his shoulder. "You've met before."

Petunia cleared her throat. "He seems… nice."

"He's a snobby arsehole," Harry returned with a tender smile.

"Oi! I resent that Potter!" The fondness in Harry's tone was the only thing to keep Draco from retaliating any further.

Harry continued to smile. "Now, about you being a wizard, Dudley… What do you want to do about this?"

"What do you mean?"

Harry sighed and looked at Dudley like he was stupid. "Do you want to learn to be a wizard? Simple question really."

"I guess I do. I'm not sure. Aren't I too old?"

"For Hogwarts, yes. But I can provide you with a tutor. Would you like that?"

Dudley looked to his mother, not sure if she wanted him to be a working wizard. But when she smiled encouragingly at him, he smiled back. "Yeah. I guess I'd like that."

Harry leaned back and stared at the ceiling, racking his brain for someone who would be appropriate to teach Dudley, someone who would have the time and resources. There was really only one person he could think of who fit the criteria. He wondered how his godfather would react when he asked him to tutor Dudley. Harry thought it was perfect for getting back at Sirius for all the money he'd thrown at him.

"Fine. I'll return sometime next week before I have to go back to school, and I'll bring your tutor. Dudley, Aunt Petunia I suggest both of you take time to think about this before I come back." Harry looked straight into Dudley's eyes, making sure he had his cousin's full attention before continuing. "This isn't a casual thing, Dudley. This is very serious. It's not going to be like Smeltings where you casually fly by, understand? I'll kick your arse myself if you say you want this and then give up after a week. Understood? You will also be putting yourself into a variable amount of danger should you decide you want to be a wizard. After all, you are my cousin even if only by adoption, and even
though the one man who's been after me most of my life is now my friend, there are others out there seeking my death now."

He paused a moment to let that sink in. "Now, when I return I'll take you around and show you a few Wizarding places; introduce you to some witches and wizards… I'll give you one hour afterwards to make your final decision."

"One hour?" Dudley croaked.

"Yes." Harry stood and looked down haughtily at his relatives. "My time is precious. Besides, I'm giving you the rest of this week to think on things as well. After I've shown you around, you should only need an hour to make your final decision." He looked between his aunt and cousin and they each gave him a nod. "Wonderful. I'll be going now." He spun around, and smirked when he felt his cloak do the whole billowing out thing as he turned. Severus would be so proud! Petunia gaped for a second before standing up and rushing to catch Harry before he left. Dudley continued to stay seated and stared at the table with a frown on his face.

"Harry?"

Harry turned and arched his brow at her. Brumek made his way over to the hidden Ozemir and Shadowed himself as well.

"It was very nice seeing you," she said quietly as Draco came to stand beside Harry and sneered down at the woman. "And… we are very happy for the two of you."

Draco snorted. "Somehow I doubt that. I'm sure you view homosexuality the same way you viewed magic. With disdain."

Petunia gave Draco her full attention and straightened her shoulders. "You are wrong. I wasn't sure how to react when you told us you and Harry were involved with each other, but I can see you make Harry happy. And now, that is all that matters to me." She turned sincere eyes on Harry. "You deserve happiness after the life we gave you."

"You are making it very hard for me to hold a grudge against you," Harry grumbled and Petunia cracked a small smile.

"Besides… I suspect my own son is bisexual. Though he's been trying to hide it from me."

"Oh, I knew it!" Ozemir chirped from within his Shadow.

"Mum!"

Petunia looked over her shoulder at her son whose mouth was hanging open in horror. "I clean your room, Dudders! I've seen those magazines." She turned back to Harry and Draco. "I've had plenty of time to think over the matter, you know." It was Harry who looked gob smacked now.

"That's why she didn't have a heart attack. What a shame…" This time there was an amused smirk on Draco's face, so Petunia didn't quite take that comment to heart.

Harry quickly masked his surprise at what the conversation had just revealed. "Well, we'll be going now. Remember what I've said. You must think hard on what you both want. Dudley's life will drastically change should he choose to accept his Wizarding inheritance. All right?"

Petunia nodded. "We'll discuss it."
"Good. Until next time. C'ya Dudley."

"Bye Harry," Dudley muttered, trying to conceal his embarrassment by continuing to stare at the table, which caused Harry to grin. He was going to have fun with this the next time he saw his cousin.

"Madam," Draco said and nodded. He was just about to call Dudley pig but Harry nudged him and shook his head. "Dursley."

Dudley didn't look up but he did wave in a half assed manner.

"I'm happy we could meet again under better circumstances, Mr. Malfoy."

"Yes, well…” Draco wrapped an arm around Harry's waist and Apparated them away without another word.

"What are you thinking, Harry?" Draco asked as they entered the bedroom. "I thought you wanted to stay away from them."

"One more person on our side, I guess. I don't really know why I offered…” Harry talked as he shed his clothing down to his boxers. "Maybe because they are still my family… even if by adoption. And they're alone now too, ya know. And not under Vernon's rule anymore. They really seem different. Maybe I just want to forgive and forget."

"Well forgive me if I never forget."

Harry rolled his eyes as he slid in to bed. "I do feel better though," he finally said while watching Draco strip. "Also a little strange as well. I never imagined Dudley would turn out to be a wizard."

Draco made a sound of disgust and approached the bed, taking pleasure in the intense ogling Harry was giving him. "Please, I don't want images of that tub of lard in my head as I go to sleep!"

Harry lifted a hand and Draco immediately entwined their fingers together and allowed Harry to pull him down on top of him. "I'll just give you other images, shall I?" and Harry proceeded to send images of exactly what he wanted Draco to do to him in explicit detail. Draco responded immediately, just as Harry knew he would, and began to kiss Harry fervently, almost desperately until he suddenly pulled away and cupped Harry's face within his hands.

"You didn't take me seriously, did you?"

"Maybe for the first ten minutes," Harry answered sheepishly, knowing Draco was talking about the not wanted comment. It had taken Harry ten minutes to calm down to realize he was being stupid.

"Do I have to say it?" Draco whispered and raised himself up enough so that he could run his hands over Harry's chest and down towards his crotch, which was twitching for some attention. Unfortunately, Draco thought Harry deserved to be punished and pulled his hands away.

"I behaved badly, I know!" Harry's voice was definitely begging, but Draco ignored this and stared down at his mate sternly.

"That's a good boy. Now turn over," Draco whispered his order and when he saw the pleased look in his lover's green eyes, he shook his head. "So I can change the bandages on your back. And then we'll be going to sleep."
"Bastard," Harry muttered as he dutifully turned over onto his stomach.
The next week passed rather quickly for Harry and his extended family. During that time, Severus took it upon himself to go to St. Mungo's to acquire some of Mr. Lovegood's blood and since then he, Draco, Tom, and Hermione spent a great deal of time locked away in a potion lab at Snape Manor trying to find a cure for the unknown illness Luna's father had contracted. Sadly though they weren't making any progress in finding a cure and Luna and her father were resolved to the fact that Mr. Lovegood would not have much longer to live. Amortia was flabbergasted as were the rest of the Healers at St. Mungo's. They had no idea what the illness was or how to fight it. It was something they had never seen before. But like Hermione, Amortia refused to give in and took up Mr. Lovegood's case personally. Every day she came by Malfoy Manor to say how Luna's father was doing and to let Luna's friends know how the young woman was coping. Which was extremely well. Amortia seemed to think both Luna and her father had expected this and had been preparing themselves for some time for Mr. Lovegood's death.

Tom received his Hogwarts letter two days after the visit to Durmstrang and nothing seemed out of the ordinary. It seemed Karkaroff preferred his life the way it was and wanted to keep the torture and death at bay, therefore he made sure the files on Luther Bailey were extensive and covered any and all basis. No one on the staff of Hogwarts would have reason to question where Luther Bailey had come from or if he really was who he claimed to be. So in that regard, Tom was all set to begin another year at Hogwarts. And he wouldn't say aloud, but he was anticipating the upcoming term. One could even say Tom Riddle was excited about it.

Harry spent the next few days trying to convince Sirius to be Dudley's tutor. At first, Sirius outright refused and Harry, not to be put off, had smiled 'the smile' and asked him again. Of course he got the desired result and Sirius agreed. But just after the effects of the smile wore off, Sirius once again refused and demanded Harry never to use that power on him again. It took Harry three more days of constant badgering, and pointing out the advantages of tutoring his cousin... In the end Sirius agreed only because he had promised himself he would do anything for Harry, be there when Harry needed him. And his godson needed him to do this. So Sirius was to become Dudley's tutor and he and Harry spent the rest of the week in the library, preparing lesson plans for his undeserving cousin. Harry wondered what Dudley would choose at the end of the week and hoped Sirius wasn't doing the work for nothing. Though he knew Sirius wouldn't be heartbroken if it turned out Dudley didn't want to embrace being a wizard, Harry was somewhat surprised to realize that he may be a little disappointed if his cousin decided to turn his back on his magical inheritance. Draco thought he was mental.

During this time, it became apparent that something was going on with Hermione, especially in the mornings when they all came together to have breakfast. After the fifth such morning, Draco finally had had enough of not knowing what was going on with her.

"Hermione, that is the third time you've let your food fall off the fork," he commented and pointed to her fork with his own. Hermione shook her head and the dazed look disappeared from her eyes. "Is there something wrong?"
Hermione's eyes shifted to Severus for a split second before returning to Draco, and Severus smirked very smugly behind his tea cup.

"N-No! I'm perfectly fine!" Hermione's face flushed deeply and she stared down at her plate.

Harry was about to point out that she was lying and that everyone could tell she was lying, but just then Remus was announced by a house elf and said werewolf quickly entered the breakfast room. He looked mildly surprised to see all the people sitting around the table and most looked entirely surprised to see him too. In the moments before anybody had a chance to move at his appearance, Remus took that time to see who was in attendance. Both Malfoys were present, with Lucius sneering at Remus' haggard appearance and Draco sitting beside Harry looking unconcerned. Sirius sat beside Lucius, and his eyes went wide upon seeing the state of his friend. Across the table Harry looked happy to see him, but Harry's frown indicated he also noticed how tired Remus was. Hermione smiled warmly at him, but for some reason she was blushing to the tips of her hair, while Severus was staring blankly at him without any expression at all. Pansy Parkinson was also in attendance, sitting beside a dark haired boy whom Remus didn't recognize, and they looked just mildly curious to see him.

"Moony!" Sirius bounded out of his chair like an excited puppy and hurried over to his friend and wrapped an arm around Remus' shoulders, much to his husband's disgust. Lucius discreetly withdrew his wand from his robes and began to point it at Remus, but Tom, who was sitting beside the elder Malfoy, moved to stop him.

"You aren't one to do drastic things, Lucius. They're only friends after all," Tom calmly whispered. "Besides, I have a feeling he is here to impart some news."

Remus nodded to the young man, having heard Tom with his sensitive werewolf hearing. "I'm sorry to barge in without sending word first. But I don't think this could have waited."

"You're allowed to barge in whenever you feel like it!" Sirius exclaimed before pushing Remus into a chair and ordering him a plate of breakfast that Remus quickly refused. "Isn't that right, Lucius?" The Animagus pinned his husband with a withering glare. Lucius, being used to such looks, ignored it and turned to Remus, who was becoming increasingly uncomfortable.

"Of course. Mr. Lupin is welcome any time. Though perhaps you would like to rest a while. You are looking more haggard than usual," Lucius couldn't help but add, even when he knew he would pay for it later. "I can have a house elf make up a room for you."

"No, thank you, Malfoy. I should tell you what I've discovered and then be on my way."

"But Moony… Are you alright?" Harry asked. "You look like you've just gone through a full moon." And the full moon wasn't for another two weeks.

"Harry, it is not polite to point out things like that," Hermione chastised.

"Sorry, I'm just worried…"

"I've been with the wild werewolves. Not the best living conditions… Dumbledore does not know I've returned yet, which is why I came directly here. Fred and George have recently found out some of the things Dumbledore is planning. There are other things he's told the Order that he plans, but I was unable to read between the lines and unfortunately that is where his true intentions lie. But I do know this much, your year at Hogwarts will not be a safe one."

Draco snorted. "Tell us something we don't already know."
"What have you heard?" Severus implored softly, feeling a bit bad for the werewolf. Remus certainly looked as if he could pass out at any moment, and instead of going home to rest, Lupin had come straight to the manor to talk with them. It certainly spoke volumes about his dedication and loyalty.

"Dumbledore is planning to take away your position as the Head of Slytherin House," Remus said to Severus and paused because he knew what kind of reaction would immediately follow such a statement.

"What?" Severus hissed lowly, his eyes narrowing to slits on Remus.

"He can't do that!" Harry yelled as he stood up, his hands gripping the edge of the desk so hard that his knuckles were turning white.

"Well that's just... That's impossible! On what grounds?" Hermione demanded.

"I don't know, but Dumbledore seems very confident that he can do this."

"Dumbledore is a fool," Draco drawled and pulled a seething Harry back into his chair and began to rub the back of the brunet's neck. "How can he possibly think to do this? He himself is still under probation from the Ministry and the School Board..."

"But he is still the Headmaster," Lucius said thoughtfully. "He still has some pull in regards to the school. Not much, but still some."

"I think we should kill him now and be done with it," Sirius said, earning a shocked look from Remus in return. Lucius looked pleased by this statement and nodded in agreement.

"No," Harry growled, his green eyes flashed dangerously and his face darkened. He bared his fangs and began to growl. This reminded everyone once again that he and Draco were Dark Creatures now; sometimes it was very easy to forget that they weren't human anymore. "I want the bastard to be alive when we take over! To know we have the power and he has nothing. Only then, when we finally have control over the Wizarding World, Dumbledore will finally die. Not one second before then!" Harry stressed his conviction by slamming a fist on the table.

"That is the plan, love." Draco took Harry's fist off the table and entwined their fingers tightly together before bringing Harry's knuckles to his lips, kissing each knuckle softly. "No need to get worked up," he murmured soothingly before turning back to the others and continued to hold onto Harry's hand. "We will discuss the Head issue in a moment. I would like to hear what else you've discovered, Remus."

Remus nodded, very impressed how well Draco had calmed Harry down in such a very short amount of time. And the fact that Draco had no qualms about showing his affection to Harry with all of them sitting there watching said a lot about how much the young Slytherin loved his mate. "He's been meeting someone the last few days, according to the twins. Fred and George have developed very good spying techniques and invented plenty of things to keep them invisible. They were able to follow Dumbledore without him knowing he was being followed. Which is an incredible feat in and of itself." Everyone agreed with a nod. "They don't know who this person is, only that it is a tall figure in a heavy black cloak. The two always meet at the Hog's Head and are there for only a short amount of time. We are unable to discern what they speak of. More than likely a bubble of silence is constructed around the table."

"It could have been Moody," Pansy said.

"If that's the case, we don't have to worry about him anymore."
"No, it's not Alastor," Remus said, shaking his head. "Moody wouldn't try to hide under a cloak just for a meeting with Dumbledore. He has no need to hide. And he isn't that tall anyway." Remus was still unaware of the former Auror's death and they all realized this when he kept speaking about Moody as if he were still alive.

"Um, Remus…" Harry ran his hand through his hair and looked at his friend nervously. "Moody is dead now."

Remus' eyes widened like saucers. "What do you mean he's dead? What happened?"

"I'll tell you what happened!" Sirius barked. "That bastard kidnapped Hermione, Luna, Dean, and Neville! He planned to torture them for information and then kill them. And he did this all under Dumbledore's orders!"

"But we tortured and killed him instead," Tom said and smirked at the surprised werewolf. "I suppose his body has yet to be found otherwise we would have read it in today's copy of the Prophet."

"More likely, Dumbledore destroyed the body. He wouldn't want anyone to know what had happened," Lucius put in.

After a moment of everyone watching conflicted emotions run across Remus' face, his expression finally landed on something akin to acceptance. Harry mentally sighed in relief when Remus finally nodded. He sipped his coffee before eyeing everyone at the table. "Tell me what happened."

It seemed like everyone breathed a sigh of relief then, especially Sirius. Remus was on their side, that was certain, but his reaction to some of the things he and Harry did was worrying the Animagus. Surprisingly it was Tom who jumped in to tell the story and he told it with more emotion than anyone expected him to. Remus sat quietly, listened intently, and halfway through the story he realized it was the Dark Lord who was speaking to him. He also took that realization with a grain of salt, and realized it was probably because he was already on the verge of violent anger from hearing what Dumbledore and Moody had put the children through. By the end of the tale, he was seething, and his eyes had started to glow yellow, his werewolf persona begging to be released to seek revenge.

"I suppose you were the one to kill Moody?" he asked Tom.

"Oh no. That pleasure was given to Severus. However, I took great pleasure in torturing him along with Lucius and Sirius."

"Don't forget, Tom. You gave Moody the Dark Mark as well," Harry said and sat back.

"Which was apparently a waste of time," Tom muttered in displeasure.

Hermione, from her seat next to Draco, saw something from the corner of her eye. She leaned back to peer at Harry and saw something like ash falling to the ground from Harry's chair.

"Err… Harry?" when she had his attention Hermione pointed to the ground behind his seat.

Harry and Draco turned to look and as Harry moved, more gray flakes fell to the ground. Draco took one look and began to snicker.

"Shut it!" Harry snapped. He turned back around and stared at the table. An embarrassing flush spread across his normally pale cheeks.
"What is it?" Lucius asked, trying to crane his neck to see.

"My lover seems to be molting," Draco answered while running a finger down Harry's flushed cheek.

"Molting?" asked Remus.

"Hasn't anymore told you yet, Moony? Harry has wings," Sirius answered. "This must mean they'll come out of the wing sacks soon. Right, Harry?"

"Today or tomorrow." Harry scowled at the funny grins he was receiving from everybody. "Do you mind if we please get back to important things? Like this stranger Dumbledore is meeting and Severus' position as Head of Slytherin."

"I'll be off to have a chat with the other Board members," Lucius announced. "If Dumbledore wants to oust you from your Head position, we as Board members will need a reason. He probably hasn't any idea that we would find out before term started and by then it would have been too late for you to do anything about it, Severus. Thank you for your information, Lupin. This way we have enough time to stop Dumbledore from succeeding in this," he supplied as he stood. Sirius stood up as well and escorted Lucius to the door, both of them were talking quietly with their heads bent close together.

Harry watched them as they talked earnestly in the doorway while the others around the table were talking with each other. Harry didn't try to hear what Sirius and Lucius were saying, but he enjoyed what he was seeing. Sirius had a large grin on his face and was inching closer to his husband. Lucius on the other hand was frowning and shaking his head. Then Lucius straightened to his full height, and Harry saw him mouth the word 'no' very clearly before turning away from his husband. Sirius frowned intensely and before Lucius could move away any further, he reached out and grabbed his chin in what Harry saw was a very firm grasp and pulled their mouths together. Lucius' eyes widened and Harry could swear he saw dangerous sparks ignite within. Did Sirius want his husband to murder him?

Lucius pulled away, sneered at Sirius then departed. Sirius followed after throwing a grin at everyone at the table. Harry was just shaking his head at Sirius' antics when suddenly there was a soft bang and Sirius came sailing through the air back into the room and landed heavily on the ground behind Remus' chair. Everyone watched silently as the Animagus stood up and dusted off his robes with a huge grin.

"What can I say, he loves me!" he then returned to his chair and acted like nothing had happened.

"We should find a way of discovering who it is that Dumbledore is meeting with. Obviously he's up to no good," Hermione finally said, breaking the amused silence with a frown on her face. "Let's get Fred and George here, as well as Dean and Neville. I think we should use the younger generation to see what the old Headmaster is doing."

"I'm not sure that's entirely the best idea you've ever come up with," Severus said.

Hermione narrowed her eyes at him. "Dumbledore will not expect to be followed around by the very children he had captured. He probably thinks we'll stay hidden away until we have to go to school and I know Neville and Dean are itching for some payback. They're ready to jump head first into helping us."

Remus nodded thoughtfully. "That's probably true, Hermione, but I don't think you should do it. Getting anywhere near Dumbledore is too dangerous."
"Perhaps we can have our guardians help. Utilize their abilities some more," Draco said and pointedly looked to the corner he knew Brumek was hidden in.

"Yes! We would love to help!" Ozemir said and jumped out next to the table beside Hermione.

"We will do no such thing," Brumek growled and he appeared also, though he stayed back. Remus sat back, startled to see the two *Ukatae*.

"Who are they?" he asked as his nostrils flared from the new scents. Why hadn't he noticed before?

"Two of the four *Ukatae* chosen to be Draco and Harry's guardians. This cheerful fellow is Ozemir," Hermione introduced, patting Ozemir's arm fondly as he sat beside her. Ozemir studied Remus for a moment before bowing his head to him. "And that is Brumek."

"They're really not here. You don't see anything," Draco whispered dramatically to Remus then shot a cheeky smirk at Brumek.

"Actually I'd rather not have to rely on our guardians," Harry said. He didn't really want to ask for the guardian's help again, especially since this was a problem dealing with humans. The only reason why he even sought help from the other *Ukatae* with Hermione's case was because he knew they needed a fast solution. There had been no time to come up with a plan of their own and no time to find their own means of searching for Hermione. "We can do this one ourselves," he said with a determined air, and he noticed Tom's nod of approval.

"I think we should leave it all until we're at school," Pansy said. "It might be easier to find out what Dumbledore is planning once at Hogwarts. The new term starts next week anyway."

"That's true," Tom said quietly, and then sipped at his tea. "But I still want an eye on him until we've gotten to school."

"That shouldn't be too hard," Severus put in. "The staff will have to go back to Hogwarts in two days time to conclude the preparations for the upcoming term. Dumbledore will not venture out that much."

"There is something else you should know before I leave," Remus cut in. "Dumbledore plans to resort some students. The twins didn't discover who would be put under the Sorting Hat again. But it is for sure that there will be a resorting."

"I don't need to guess who he's going to try to resort. It's obvious," Harry said. "And he's doing it to create more discord among the Houses. He's aware of where the Sorting Hat really wanted to place me."

"It'll be Hermione and Harry for sure. I bet he wants you two into Slytherin," Draco said. He would love to have them in his House but knew that if that were to happen it would ruin their plans, or at least make it more difficult to achieve what they were after.

"To make the rest of the school turns their backs on you," Tom said with a nod. "The less people on your side the better for him."

"For things to work out the way we want them to, you and Hermione definitely need to remain in Gryffindor."

"I know, Draco."

"But if he does manage to get the hat on you two, Harry will definitely be resorted into Slytherin and
it is very likely Hermione will be sent to Slytherin as well," Severus said and smirked at his witch. "Especially after all the changes that has been happening to and around you."

Hermione cleared her throat and fought the blush trying to overtake her face. "I think there is only a fifty percent chance of that. Either I do get resorted to Slytherin, or I'll stay in Gryffindor. The other Houses wouldn't fit me at all. Ravenclaw maybe… but if Dumbledore wants me resorted, that's not the house he would choose."

"Do you think Dumbledore could have tampered with the hat, Uncle Sev?"

"Yes, it is a possibility, Harry. Dumbledore's magic is strong enough…"

"What is this hat you speak of?" Ozemir asked after snatching a piece of bacon off Hermione's plate.

"The Sorting Hat," Hermione began primly and Harry barely managed to retain a disgusted moan when he heard his friend go into lecture mode. "When a child is eleven and has magical abilities, enough to be classified as a witch or wizard, the child receives a letter inviting them to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The school is separated into four Houses: Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff, and Ravenclaw. When the term starts -"

"Basically the Sorting Hat determines which House the kid would thrive best in," Harry interrupted. "Well, if you're going to quote Hogwarts, A History you might as well give him a copy to read, Hermione," he went on before she could chastise him for interrupting.

"I would like to see this book," Ozemir said and earned himself a smile and nod from Hermione. "It would be wise to get to know this place since we will continue our duties as your guardians there as well."

"As I was about to say before I was so rudely interrupted… The Sorting Hat was made for the specific purpose of putting each child into the House they belong to. The Four Founders of the school each put a bit of their magic into the hat to make it animate and be able to function the way they want it to."

"So if a wizard or witch wanted to destroy the hat?" Ozemir asked.

"No, the Founders magic is too strong. I don't think even Dumbledore could do that."

"If this Dumbledore fellow has tampered with this hat, you as a Ukatae, young one, can destroy it in order to keep it from ruining your plans."

"Really? Wow. That's good to know, but I don't think I'd want to destroy the hat. Just make sure it doesn't try to resort me."

"Our powers are strong enough to keep it in line, I assure you," Ozemir continued and ignored the glare Brumek was giving him. "The power of wizards and witches is nothing compared to ours when we've mastered our abilities."

"That's great. Now all we have to do is get to the Sorting Hat before Dumbledore puts it on your heads… I don't know how we'll accomplish that," Draco mused.

"Whoever goes first can threaten it." Harry thought that was simple enough. He was sure that if the hat were told it would be destroyed if it put either himself or Hermione in Slytherin, surely that threat would keep them in Gryffindor. It would have to believe if they pointed out the fully-trained Ukatae standing in the shadows in the Great Hall. The Sorting Hat had to know what the Ukatae could accomplish… hopefully.
Severus stood up then and prepared to leave. "Where are you going?" Draco asked.

"To speak to Dumbledore."

"You're not going there alone!" Harry, Draco, and Hermione yelled as one. Severus looked at them with an amused expression.

"Why not? He doesn't scare me. I'm not about to let that old man dictate my life. I won't give him the pleasure. Besides, the worst he could do to me at Hogwarts at the moment is to try and get into my mind and you know how good I am at Occlumency. He will be sorely disappointed."

"I still don't like you being alone with him, Uncle Sev. Why can't you wait until Lucius comes back?"

Severus saw how upset this was making Harry and he hesitated. On one hand he didn't want Dumbledore to get the best of him. And he was telling the truth when he said he wasn't afraid of the old wizard. But he didn't want to make Harry worry either.

"Fine. I will wait for Lucius to return," he sighed. Harry beamed at him. "Now if you'll excuse me, I must return home. I have more work to do on Mr. Lovegood's potions."

"But you just got here," Harry complained. "Did you only come for breakfast?"

Severus smirked. "I've been here all-"

"Would you look at the time? I need to get to the library!" Hermione practically yelled and bolted from her seat, nearly overturning Draco's teacup in the process. "Tom, we should start our lessons now, don't you think?"

Remus' eyes widened at the familiar way Hermione spoke and looked at Voldemort. He'd heard they were acquaintances now, but as Voldemort stood, chuckling under his breath, Remus realized they were not just acquaintances, but also friends. This knowledge was surreal.

Severus' smirk deepened as he watched Hermione quickly disappear. Tom turned and gave the Potions Master a small tight smile. "We'll join you in your labs later in the day, Severus." And then he too departed.

"Hermione's reaction was very telling." Sirius said with a scowl as Severus left the room. He hadn't wanted to know Snape was spending his nights with Hermione. In fact, now that he thought about it that was probably why Hermione had been spending most of her nights at the manor instead of at her parents' home. So that she and Severus could be together. "Ugh. I'm going to tell Lucius to ban him from staying over!" Even as he said he knew he wouldn't really. Hermione would kill him.

"At least now we know why Hermione acts the way she does in the mornings," Draco said to Harry, who nodded absently. "I'm glad Ozemir taught us how to block other's emotions a few days back, otherwise we'd have felt everything." Harry gave another absent agreement.

"You weren't supposed to let on about that, young one," Ozemir hissed and then removed himself from the table and disappeared into his Shadow before Brumek could chastise him for that as well. Draco wasn't paying any attention to the elder *Ukatae*, but instead was watching Harry with a worried expression. He wondered what was bothering his mate. Harry was just looking off as if seeing nothing around him.

"I need to go now." Remus stood and Sirius followed. "Can I suggest something before I go?" he asked looking between Harry and Draco. The blond had to prod Harry to get him to come out of his
daze and pay attention. "If Dumbledore doesn't know Dean, Neville, and Luna work with you, I suggest you keep it that way. Try and keep the number of allies you have a secret. Make him think those three have cut all ties with you because they believe it's your fault they were kidnapped and ordered to be killed. Let him think everyone else wants to stay away from you because they've all heard what happened. Dumbledore will believe it."

"That's a good idea, Moony. Dean and Neville, for sure, but I'm not too certain about Luna. Dumbledore knows how loyal Luna is to me and how fond of her I am."

"Well the others then. And in Luna's case, I suggest you keep her safe. But now I must be off."

"Keep yourself well, Remus. Take a few days rest if you can," Harry implored after he stood to give Remus a hug.

"I'll try, Harry. But it can't be promised." Harry wasn't pleased was this response, but knew there was nothing to be done about it.

Sirius and Remus left, leaving Harry and Draco alone with Pansy. Harry went back to staring at the table, his brow furrowed in deep thought.

"How do we contact Longbottom and Thomas without Dumbledore knowing? Their homes are almost certainly watched by him now," Pansy asked.

"Are you still corresponding with Charlie? He's gone back to Romania, correct?"

"Yes, dear Draco. We owl each other every day," she replied smugly. "He finally got a clue and realized it doesn't do him any good to try and ignore me."

"Hmm…. Perhaps you should owl Charlie immediately and have him send word to Longbottom and Thomas."

"That will take too much time and the owl would be intercepted I'm sure. Really, Draco, that was a dreadful suggestion."

Draco thought so to, but as he was still worried about what was bothering Harry, he wasn't concerned about that. Draco was just about to ask Harry what was bothering him when Ozemir showed up within a Ukatae circle and out jumped Dean and Neville.

"I really must be off now if I don't want to be reprimanded for helping you," Ozemir said quickly, then he dashed away in his Shadow. Moments later a booming voice could be heard throughout the manor yelling Ozemir's name.

"That one, Brumek… He needs to lighten up," Pansy said snickering.

"We've been abducted again, Neville," said Dean, smiling around the table. "Care to explain why we're here?"

Pansy looked to Harry and Draco, and when neither made a move to explain, with Harry staring darkly at the table and Draco watching him, she took it upon herself to explain this new situation with Dumbledore.

Ozemir casually leaned against the wall in a hallway deep within the manor with his legs crossed at the ankles and his arms crossed over his chest. He cocked his head to the side and avidly watched Brumek as the big warrior stood in front of him and continued to berate him for bringing the friends
of the young ones to the manor and *blah blah blah*...

"Are you not listening to me?" Brumek suddenly hissed and seized Ozemir by his white tunic, pulling him away from the wall and bringing their faces close together.

In truth Ozemir really wasn't listening. He was more enthralled in watching Brumek lose the little patience he had, and Ozemir so enjoyed being the one able to make Brumek forget his training. It was always so much fun! "Of course I am. I'm listening with every fiber of my being," he replied sweetly. He shifted just a little bit back and fluttered his long white eyelashes, inwardly smirking when Brumek began to growl. Brumek really hated it when he flirted with him. Absolutely abhorred it.

"We have our orders. Are you determined to follow none of them?"

"If I don't do something, I'll grow bored. And what I did hurts no one," he purred and leant just a bit into Brumek's clawed hand still gripping the front of his tunic. "You are convinced I can be no use in any way, but did I not just help them? I've kept them inside the safety of their home and it took me only moments to fetch their friends. I see no reason why you should be so angry, Brumek."

Brumek quickly let go of him as if his hand had been burnt. He snapped his mouth shut and it didn't look like he was going to nag at him anymore but then the look in those granite eyes changed and Ozemir held his breath. "How did you learn to throw a dagger like that?" the question seemed to come out of nowhere and it was clear from the look on Brumek's face that he had not meant to ask it.

Ozemir blinked stupidly for a moment. That was not what he thought would be said. And then frustration reared its ugly head again. But frustration was better than panic. "Not this again! Stop acting as if you have no intelligence! Can you not comprehend that I am well able to protect myself? I don't need to wait inside somewhere to keep myself safe, as you so rudely announced to everyone a few days ago," Ozemir hissed all this with a cold tone. "And since you're so interested, I'll tell you. I learned how to throw a dagger the same way I learned how to do this."

Ozemir seemed to shift in and out of shadow, which took less than a second and Brumek blinked. He looked down to find the steel tip of his own sword pressed into his neck. Looking back up, his surprised eyes landed on Ozemir's frigid smile.

"Oh yes. I must be completely worthless to be able to steal the Second's weapon right out from under his nose." Before Brumek could start asking the questions he knew would be coming, Ozemir turned and walked away after handing back the sword. "I think I'll return to the young ones. At least they trust me."

"How in Hirsha's name did you do that?" Brumek shouted after Ozemir, his tone completely shocked and in awe. He would have gone after him, but was stopped by a petite hand on his arm. Looking down he found the hand belonged to a grinning Talyn, and Falde stood off a few feet behind. They'd finally come back from the Council.

"The important thing here is the fact that he can do it and not how, why, or where."

"Do you know?"

"No. And I don't care to know."

"Leave it," Falde said. "We have much to discuss. I think we should return to the forest and speak there." He didn't want the young ones to overhear what was going to be said. "But first, we need to inspect the young ones."
"Inspect?"

"Yes. I will explain after." Falde's look warned Brumek that not everything was right with the world. Something had happened. Maybe it was a battle. Perhaps, Hirsha willing, they had been called to battle and he wouldn't have to be stuck babysitting young ones anymore.

"So you want us to keep an eye on Dumbledore? How are we supposed to do that?" Neville inquired once Pansy had finished telling them why they'd been brought to Malfoy Manor.

"Each of you will be disguised and take a turn each night posting at the Hog's Head to spy on Dumbledore until we have to return to school."

Neville gulped and seemed to be slightly shaking his head, but Dean had a determined look upon his face and he nodded. Seeing Neville's reaction, Draco sneered and stood, placing both hands upon the table and leaned forward.

"If you can't handle this, Longbottom, we'll find someone else. After all, I don't expect you can do anything right anyway. You'd probably alert Dumbledore the moment he steps through the door."

Harry put a restraining hand on his arm before he could say more. "Neville will do it. And he'll do it well."

"That's right, Malfoy. I may be afraid, but I'll do what you want and Dumbledore will never know I'm there."

Draco smirked and sat down. "Good. I'd hate for Harry to find he was wrong about you being worth something. He says you have a backbone… So prove it. You would not be of any use to this organization if you continue to hesitate in doing what needs to be done," he finished coldly.

Harry looked to his friends. "You must understand. You are my friends and will stay my friends. However…" here Harry's eyes flashed and his voice lowered to a deadly softness. "We do not accept incompetence. We will not accept bent loyalty, and you will need to prove your worth. I already know you have the skills to succeed so I know your worth, but proving yourself in regards to the organization is different. You must prove your loyalty to all and not just to me."

"I get what you're saying. I think it's fair," Dean replied. Neville nodded in agreement, but otherwise remained silent. For a moment, he was hesitant to look Malfoy in the eye, but then quickly thought better of it. He straightened himself out and matched the Slytherin's gaze. This seemed to please Malfoy, as he smirked and sat back in his chair. Neville was surprised to see Draco's sneer had no trace of malice behind it.

"Can you guys hang around here for a bit?" Harry asked. "I have some business to see to."

"Yeah. Sure, mate," Neville said and sat down next to Pansy, with Dean taking a seat on the other side of the Slytherin girl.

Harry turned to his mate. "Lover?"

"Yes. Go, go…" Draco waved his hand towards the door. "I have no desire to see that… blimp."

A bubble of laughter burst out of Harry then. He'd never thought of Dudley like that before, and it made quite the funny picture in his head. "How do you even know what a blimp is?"

Draco sniffed disdainfully. "You'd be surprised how much I know about the muggle world." Harry
smiled before moving his chair back to stand, only to stop when Draco gently grasped his chin and made Harry look at him once more. Pansy, Neville, and Dean decided now was a good time to talk amongst themselves.

Draco caressed Harry's chin with his thumb, his silver eyes burning brightly into sparkling emerald orbs. "We'll get him, Harry," the blond murmured, having figured out what had taken up Harry's attention earlier. "I swear he'll pay."

Harry nodded and bent down to brush his lips over Draco's. They shared a rather heated kiss in front of their friends before Pansy cleared her throat and Harry pulled back with a lovely blush spreading across his delicate features. Harry grinned sheepishly at all of them and headed to the door.

"Do be careful, lover. I would hate to get my clothes dirty in order to save your arse," Draco called as Harry left.

"Prat!" was the lighthearted reply.

Draco chuckled softly to himself; that is until he saw Pansy and the Gryffindors watching him. His smile quickly turned into a sneer.

Dean shook his head and snickered. "Too late, Malfoy. We've already seen you aren't the cold hearted bastard you'd like us all to believe."

Draco's grin was feral as he flashed his fangs at Dean and Neville. "Consider yourselves lucky that you mean something to Harry and will remain safe from me. But I assure you I am a cold hearted bastard and hope to remain one." His tone was so cold that Neville couldn't help but shiver. Pansy on the other hand merely rolled her eyes at her friend's dramatics.

"Now, shall we get on to business?"

"Inspection?" Harry inquired after Falde found him walking the halls in search of Sirius and told Harry about this inspection. Then he waved his hand as if it didn't matter. "Whatever it is, it will have to wait. I have things to do now. Tripe!"

A house elf popped in and bowed. "Yes, Master Harry?"

"I'm looking for Sirius. Where is he?"

"He is in the library, Master Harry."

"Thank you." Harry gave Tripe a smile and turned down the corridor that would lead him to the library. "I will be leaving in a minute," he said as an afterthought to the *Ukatae* guard. He figured a warning would be nice, unlike all the other times when he and Draco would just pop off without a word, leaving the other *Ukatae* to search for them.

He wondered which of the four would be his escorts this time. He hoped it was Ozemir and Brumek. They were always fun to watch. It was clear Brumek was Ozemir's unrequited love, and Harry wondered if the tall warrior would ever wake up and see because it was also clear Brumek had no idea. Harry supposed he'd just have to wait and see. But he hoped he wouldn't have to see Ozemir being completely crushed.

Harry paused in the middle of the corridor and turned back to the four *Ukatae*. Maybe he would help just a little bit. "May I request who is to guard me on my trip?" he asked Falde who immediately nodded. "I would like Brumek and Ozemir please," Harry said and smiled innocently. Behind the
three males, he saw Talyn grin back at him. She knew what he was up to and she gave him a nod of encouragement.

"Of course," Falde replied. Harry nodded then continued on his way to the library. Brumek immediately set after him but Falde held Ozemir back before he could follow as well.

"Check for marks, Ozemir. Find the markings."

"Falde?"

"You are right. Something is different about these young ones. Rumors are buzzing around and it has the Council growling away like a pack of deranged wolves. I've had my suspicions... check for the markings."

Ozemir nodded, hiding his surprise. Falde hadn't been very forthcoming with him on information since the team had been put together. This was a first. He was surprised, but also very pleased. Pleased even though he knew Falde still knew more than he was letting on. "But of course I've known those two were special the moment we locked onto their power!" he chimed a bit too enthusiastically and bounced on his toes. Falde suppressed a grin, just barely.

"Just make sure you check for markings and report back."

"Yes, sir!" Ozemir chirped and then practically skipped his way after Harry and Brumek.

"I told you about Harry's wings," Talyn said as she and her leader turned the other way to look for Draco. "We knew this was going to happen. And it will only get worse once they are brought to the realm. Falde, they haven't even stepped foot within the Ukatae realm and yet they already have many enemies there." Talyn began to chew on her bottom lip, an indication to Falde about how bothered she was.

"What is it?" Falde stopped walking and forced his friend to look at him.

"We are doing the bidding of the Council by protecting the young ones. I must tell you now, because I know how dedicated you are to the working order, but should the Council turn against Harry and Draco, I will turn against the Council."

Falde and Talyn watched each other for a moment, and Talyn wondered whether she would lose her friend over such a bold statement. She needn't have worried. "I have thought about nothing else since the first meeting with the Council this past week and I am prepared to evoke the Rite of Blood Guardian. These two are important, Talyn. Our future. But they are so young. They must be protected, guided..." he paused when Talyn gasped. "Will you join me in the Ritual?" It took only a moment for Talyn to get over the surprise of that statement and she eagerly nodded in acceptance.

"Good. We will hold our own council with the young ones from now on, and keep certain information from the Council. We will begin to teach them our ways. Teaching them how to fight will be the first order of business I think."

"What about Brumek and Ozemir?"

"Ozemir holds no respect for the Council and he is already very fond of the young ones. Brumek... Brumek will follow his Commander no matter what his personal feelings are. They will agree with us."

Dudley Dursley sat at the table within the kitchen tapping his fingers in agitation. Ever since Harry
had visited them, he had taken to sitting around the flat whenever he had nothing to do and wondering what day Harry would decide to drop by again. He was excited and maybe a little apprehensive about seeing the world his cousin lived in. He'd mostly made up his mind about the whole wizard thing, but he wanted to see first and his patience was wearing thin. Harry said sometime this week, but the week was almost up. When was Harry going to get here? Maybe Harry decided he wouldn't come back. Honestly Dudley wouldn't blame him if that were the case.

"He'll come, dear," Petunia said, cutting into his thoughts as she made lunch at the counter. Dudley realized he'd been speaking out loud. "Harry said he would come."

"Yeah, but what if that Draco bloke changed Harry's mind. He didn't seem to like us very much."

Petunia nodded. "I understand why that would be. He no doubt knows everything that's happened to Harry while living in our household… If I were Mr. Malfoy I wouldn't want Harry near us either."

Dudley studied his mother for a minute and shook his head. "Mum, you sure are taking their relationship well. I was certain you would freak out."

"I would have once upon a time. But I like to think I'm changing for the better. And how can I be against something that obviously makes Harry happy? He deserves it, doesn't he?"

Dudley nodded and stared back at the table, pushing away the guilt he felt about everything he'd done to his cousin. Harry did deserve to be happy.

Petunia finished putting the last touches on her son's lunch and then stared at it skeptically. She'd made him a chicken salad and green apple slices for dessert. The last few years she'd tried and failed to keep Dudley on a diet, mainly they failed because Dudley didn't want to stay on the diet and Petunia only wanted her son to be happy. But now it was different. Now she was determined to be a better mother, even if it meant making her son unhappy. He would be unhappy, but at least he would be healthy.

Resolutely Petunia squared her shoulders and picked up the plate. She turned and placed the meager lunch in front of her brooding son and waited for the complaining to start. Imagine Petunia's surprise when Dudley thanked her and started to eat without another word. She took moment to get over that shock before sighing and sitting down, not really sure what to do with herself. Their flat was so small that it usually only took her an hour in the mornings to clean it. If it weren't for Dudley, she was sure she would go insane. There was simply nothing to do.

"I think I will start looking for part-time work," she finally said.

"No, Mum. That's my job to look after you."

Petunia smiled and squeezed his hand. "But dear, I don't like being cooped up here with nothing to do. I think I would enjoy working. I certainly liked it when I looked after Harry's friends. Maybe I could work part time at a hospital. A nurse's aid or something."

Dudley looked up from his salad. "It's obvious Harry has money. Last time he was over it practically screamed at us. Maybe he'd hire you. His friends said they always get into danger."

Petunia allowed herself a little giggle. "That is true. And Mr. Malfoy has money as well. He is a very aristocratic young man. Old money, that one."

"I don't like him," Dudley grumbled. "He looks dangerous."

Petunia took a breath, remembering the way both Harry and his lover looked. "I think they are both
very dangerous, Dudley." She leaned forward, placing a hand on her son's arm. "Are you sure you want to do this? Get mixed in with them. Harry said it would be dangerous for you."

"I'm not sure. How can I be sure of something like this? It's strange… I spent my whole life hating him because he was a wizard. And now I am one. Why would he give me a chance to learn? I guess that's what I'm so uncertain about. If I were him, I wouldn't want anything to do with us."

Petunia smiled though her eyes were sad. "We don't know Harry at all, do we?"

"Should we- do you think we can trust him?"

"Yes," Petunia immediately said. "If he planned to harm us in any way, he would have done it already. And Mr. Malfoy already had his chance, and he chose to let us live didn't he. Whatever I may feel about Harry, I know he means us no harm."

Dudley nodded, feeling much better after his mother's reassurances. "But when is he going to get here?" he whined.

"Who knows, but I'm sure he'll come. Finish your lunch and then we'll go shopping." Petunia stood up to finish cleaning the dishes. "You need new clothes. At least it will keep your mind off of wondering when Harry will arrive with your tutor."

Dudley nodded, excited about that idea. Over the past week he'd lost a significant amount of weight due to his exercising, but mostly it was from whatever Harry's friend had done to him. He was still on the big side, but he was no longer obese, and his clothes had begun to hang off him like Harry's use to. And even though he knew it was magic, Dudley wasn't going to stop excising. He quite liked it.

He had just finished his lunch and stood to bring his dish to the sink when someone knocked on the door. Both Dursleys stopped what they were doing to stare at the door, both still wary of strangers.

"There, you see?" Petunia finally said with a strained smile. "That must be Harry now."

Petunia walked to the door all the while hoping that it really was Harry. When they left Privet Drive she had told no one where they were moving to and the only people who knew where they lived was Harry and his friends. Nevertheless, Petunia looked through the peephole before opening the door. When she saw who stood on the other side, she gasped and then pressed her forehead against the door and squeezed her eyes closed.

"Who is it, what's wrong?" Dudley asked and hurried to his mother's side. Petunia shook her head and immediately unlocked and opened the door and stared unblinking at the man who stood beside Harry.

"Hello Petunny!" Sirius said and grinned maliciously at her. Harry blinked in surprise then stared between his aunt and godfather.

"Sirius Black," Petunia replied and scrunched her nose up as if she were remembering a horrible smell.

"You recognize me? I have to say I'm surprised."

"I'd never forget your face, Black," Petunia spat. Then she took a deep breath. "I suppose I'll have to let you in." She stepped back and allowed Harry and Sirius to enter. Both Dudley and Harry said hello to each other, and then went back to watching Petunia and Sirius, who eyed each other carefully.
"You know each other? Sirius you never said you actually knew Aunt Petunia personally."

"Oh yes, we're quite acquainted with each other," Petunia ground out and turned her back on Sirius to flee to the kitchen. "How are you, Harry?" she asked on her way.

"I'm fine, Aunt Petunia."

"Don't be like that, Petunny. It was only a joke and it happened a long time ago. Besides, consider it my payback for how you treated my godson all these years," Sirius said darkly while eyeing Dudley.

"What did you do?" Harry whispered to Sirius.

"I may or may not have sabotaged a date... I don't know. My memory's a bit dodgy." Sirius had the good grace to look sheepish. Every one turned to the kitchen in surprise when Petunia shrieked.

"A date? A date!" She spun around and pinned Sirius with a stabbing glare. "No it was not just a date! You chased away the man I was very much in love with and you did it on purpose! You and your friends thought I wasn't good enough for a wizard, and so you humiliated me and chased him away! Do you have any idea how long it took me to get over that?" Petunia walked back to Sirius and gave him a look over. She stopped when she noticed he wore a wedding band. "You're married? Are you happy?"

Sirius shuffled his feet and looked away. "Yeah."

"Isn't that just lovely for you," she snarled, sarcasm dripping from every syllable. "While I was so heartbroken that I married the very next man who asked me out!"

"Sirius?" Harry looked at his godfather with a cross look. This was something he'd never heard about. Aunt Petunia had been in love with a wizard before she met Vernon? Said wizard dropped her because of a prank Sirius had pulled? That also explained more of why Petunia had been so bitter and jealous of her sister. Lily had been able to marry the man she'd loved, while Petunia hadn't. Harry could certainly understand why Petunia would be so bitter against wizards. "Sirius, did you really do that?" he hissed.

Sirius flinched. "It wasn't supposed to turn out the way it did. It was only supposed to be a little prank," he whispered back to Harry. Guilt seemed to cloud over him as he stared at Petunia's furiously shaking body. "I'll just go and wait out in the hall."

Harry nodded while his gaze returned to his aunt. "Yeah, we'll be along in a minute."

It was completely silent for a minute after Sirius had left the flat, until Harry couldn't stand the silence anymore. "I'm sorry. I had no idea bringing him would cause you such distress."

"No, Harry. I should be the one to apologize. You are guests and I should act accordingly. Forgive my bad manners."

Harry could do nothing but laugh. "Aunt Petunia, under the circumstances I think you are allowed to be bad tempered. My godfather happens to bring out the worst in people most of the time. Uncle Severus can attest to that." Harry quickly turned to Dudley. "Are you ready? We have a lot to see before we meet up with my friends tonight."

"Yeah, just let me get a coat."

"No need. I'll get you a cloak in Diagon Alley."
"Just a minute." Petunia left the room, but returned quickly and pressed money into Dudley's hand. "In case you need it."

"That will not be necessary. I will see to all of Dudley's needs while we are out." Harry looked at his cousin and smirked. The look did nothing to relieve Dudley of his apprehension.
"That was awkward," Sirius ventured when they were outside of the apartment building. Both Harry and Dudley looked at him incredulously.

"You-" Harry stopped and ran a hand through his hair then glared at him. "Sirius, why didn't you tell me Aunt Petunia hated you for a specific reason before we went up there? It's no wonder she hates wizards and magic!"

On top of that Harry could feel Dudley's righteous anger from the hurt his mother endured because of what Sirius had done. What kind of student/teacher relationship could they have if the student resented the teacher? Would Dudley decide against becoming a wizard because of this? Harry knew how stubborn Dudley could be.

"Dammit, Padfoot!" Harry snarled.

Several people around them looked at Harry warily and quickly passed the three men. Some even ventured out onto the street to keep as far away from Harry as possible as they moved passed. Dudley touched Harry's arm warily and Harry blinked at him in surprise.

"It's fine. Let's just go to wherever you were going to take me. This won't affect my decision," Dudley said coolly while he glared at Sirius.

"Good," Harry told him, and then he turned and got into Sirius' face. "But this discussion is not finished." Sirius nodded quickly; relieved he had a slight reprieve from the argument he knew would happen between himself and his godson.

"Are we going to walk or do you want to Apparate, Harry?"

"We'll Apparate to Fred and George's store so that we won't waste any time." Harry hoped Ron wasn't there. He really wasn't in the mood to interact with him at the moment. He took the lead and led them to a nearby alley and then from there they Apparated with Harry taking Dudley by side-along.

Dudley leaned against the brick wall in the alleyway when Harry let him go and took a deep breath. "That felt really weird. Like my body was turned inside out then back again in a split second."

Dudley took another breath then pushed away from the wall. Harry was nodding to him.

"Yeah, that's Apparition." Dudley watched him turn and look at the opposite wall. "Do I have to keep this stupid glamour on?"

"You're talking to a wall," Dudley said, thinking that his cousin might really be insane.

"Yes," a disembodied voice answered from where Harry was looking. Dudley blinked several times but could not see who had spoken. "We do not-"

"Show ourselves to humans… I know. Honestly, it's not like the Wizarding World doesn't already
know that Draco and I are something else." Harry rolled his eyes then turned back to Dudley who had been looking around intently to where the voice had come from. "My bodyguards," Harry told him in way of an explanation, but Dudley didn't believe him. Harry must have realized this because he rolled his eyes. "Brumek, Ozemir can you please show yourselves for a second to prove to my cousin that I'm not really insane."

Dudley moved his gaze back to where Harry was looking then gasped when two tall men appeared. One was the same guy who'd been with Harry last week and the other was shorter and had really fine white hair. This one smiled and waved while the other simply glared, then they both vanished.

"There. Happy now? Good," Harry said before Dudley could even answer. Harry began to stroke his bare neck and made a hissing noise. Dudley backed himself up against the wall again when a black snake suddenly appeared, coiled around Harry's neck, and hissed back.

"What the bloody hell? Is that a viper? You have a fucking viper around your neck, Harry!"

"This is Lovely. She's my familiar." Harry grinned darkly. "She's not harmless." Dudley began to sputter. But Harry ignored this. "C'mon. I'm sure Sirius Apparated straight into the store." Harry turned around and headed out of the alleyway. Dudley found his feet moving only after he received a rough push from one of Harry's invisible bodyguards. He was sure it was from that Brumek bloke. He seemed like an arse.

Dudley caught up with Harry just as his cousin was entering the store with a sign that announced Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes. He didn't have time to look around the street because Harry reached back and quickly pulled him the rest of the way in and away from the door. "Don't linger at the door unless you feel like being turned into something," Harry explained as they walked further in.

Suddenly Harry stopped, and Dudley began to worry when Harry started to growl lowly. Dudley saw that Harry was staring at a red headed boy who looked to be around their age. He was staring back at Harry with a look of intense loathing. The redhead seemed kind of familiar to Dudley, but he couldn't place where he'd seen the boy before.

"What the hell are you doing here?" the boy behind the counter snapped.

"Once again I have to remind you that I am a stock holder." Dudley's eyes widened. "I can come and go as I please. Not that it's any of your bloody business." Harry turned his back on Weasley and looked around. "Oi, Fred? George?" Dudley just stood back and watched, thinking it would be better to be silent and simply observe. This was Harry's territory and if Harry wanted him to know what was going on he'd tell him.

Another young man with bright red hair popped his head out from behind an aisle to Dudley's left. This man was also kind of familiar and he made Dudley uneasy for some reason. A grin broke out across the bloke's face when his eyes landed on Harry.

"Harry!" The man excused himself from the customer he was helping and quickly made his way to them.

"George, you didn't have to leave your customer," Harry replied with a grin.

"Ah, they understand. It's Harry Potter! You always come first, mate."

"Please don't start that in front of Ron," Harry hissed. "His jealousy already knows no bounds."

"Sorry, Harry. But it's the truth. Everyone loves you."
"That can't be true. After everything the *Prophet* has been reporting this summer…"

"Ah well…" George moved closer to Harry, his lips moving close to the brunette's ear. "To tell the truth, a lot of people don't believe that you have joined-" Harry lifted a hand, his eyes going wide.

"We can talk about this later. Where's Fred? Did you get Draco's message?"

"You mean the highly pompous summons? Yeah. Fred's there now." Dudley snorted. Pompous summoning seemed to fit perfectly with his ideas about Harry's fiancé. His laughter brought the red head's attention to him. "Who's this then? He's familiar."

"This is my cousin, Dudley. Turns out he's a wizard. Dudley, this is George Weasley. He owns the store and is a very good friend of mine."

"Err… Hi." Dudley stuck out his hand, but flinched when he saw the hard glare George was giving him.

"You're the little shit who-"

"We'll talk about that later as well. Just be nice to him, alright?" Harry asked softly. George stared at Harry for a moment then let out a deep breath.

"Alright! Merlin Harry, don't look at me like that with those eyes." George then grabbed Dudley's hand from where he'd dropped it back to his side, gave it two pumps then released it.

"Didn't Sirius come in here?" Harry asked.

"No. Haven't seen him lately." George raised his hand to wave at a couple of nice looking witches who entered the store. They gawked a bit upon seeing Harry, but he just ignored them.

"He was supposed to meet us here," Harry said, frowning.

"Oi, Ronnikins. Did you see Sirius?"

"No, and don't call me that," Ron snapped back.

"Gods, he just keeps getting worse every day. It's his own fault, and Finnegan's… Speak of the Devil."

Harry and Dudley turned back to the door to watch another boy walk in and Dudley heard Harry growling again. He looked just in time to see George throw an arm over Harry's shoulders. He was close enough to catch what the red head whispered into his cousin's ear. "Don't go losing your temper or I'll have no choice but to get Draco here right quick. And I really don't want to do that. Draco's no fun to be around when he's pissed beyond control."

"That bloke can be fun?" Dudley finally ventured to speak.

"Oh loads." George, Harry, and Dudley watched as Seamus walked in and stopped three feet in front of Harry.

"Look who it is." He sneered and studied Harry from head to toe. "Harry Bloody Potter. Getting ready to send us all to Hell, Harry? Where's your new friend? Off planning more Death Eater raids?" Seamus' eyes continued to roam over Harry's body in a way that made Harry want to skin the bastard. No one was allowed to look at him like that except for Draco. "That snake around your neck is pretty ugly. Matches your soul now, yeah?"
Dudley clenched his fists. "Don't talk to Harry like that!" he spat.

Harry and George turned and looked at Dudley in surprise, but he was too busy glaring at Finnegan. He'd also noticed the way the Irish wizard was looking at his cousin. Harry masked his pleasure and surprise over having Dudley stand up for him. He crossed his arms over his chest and smirked at the poor misguided Gryffindor standing in front of him. "Tell me, Seamus. Have you ever wondered when you were going to die?"

"I'm sure he thought he was dying when Draco was beating him to death last week," George put in.

"I've heard from a reliable source," Harry continued and walked towards Seamus, smirking when Finnegan backed away. "You should keep a look out for a sinister glowing green mark hovering over your head."

"You- you can't threaten me, Potter!" Seamus cried out as he continued to back away his eyes wide with fear. "I'll go straight to Dumbledore!"

Harry lowered his chin to his chest and started to chuckle lowly. The sound produced goose bumps to all who heard it. When Harry looked up, still laughing, his glamour was gone and his eyes gleamed like bright emerald fire. "Oh, please do. Please. Run, hop, skip or whatever to Dumbledore. Cry on the sodding old man's shoulder for all I care." Harry looked down and studied his nails. "But it wasn't a threat."

"It was a threat if I ever heard one!"

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"It was a threat if I ever heard one!"

Harry turned his back on Seamus and glared at Ron. "It was a promise," he hissed quietly to himself. George, being right beside Harry, heard this and raised his eyebrows. So this was what the *Ukatae* were like when embracing their Dark natures.

"Harry," he murmured and prodded Harry's shoulder, grinning. "Stop it. You're seriously giving me a hard on."

Dudley nearly choked on his tongue. Harry looked at George and blinked. Then he started laughing. He laughed so hard that he soon had tears falling down his cheeks. Ron stood with his mouth open like a fish for a moment, before he came around the counter. He planned to go after Seamus who had wisely fled the store, but George grabbed his arm as he passed.

"No. You're going to stay here and mind the store," George said lowly while Harry put up his glamour once more.

"But-"

"No. You wanted to work here, so work! I'm going out with Harry here. If you leave after Finnigan then consider yourself banned from the store until you grow a brain, little bro."

Ron was so angry that he couldn't form one coherent word. His face turned dark purple and his mouth opened and closed like a gold fish. Finally he ground his teeth together and shoved passed Harry and Dudley back to the counter. Harry looked at the offended shoulder Ron had touched and brushed away the invisible dust left behind.

"You sure you want to go with us?" Harry asked, looking at George. "I'm just showing Dudley around, letting him get a feel of our world."

"Hell yes! This'll be fun."
"You know," Dudley ventured, and gulped when Harry pierced him with a stare. Dudley pointed at Ron. "He looks just like Dad did when he got very angry. His face is like an overgrown purple plum."

Harry chose to take that comment the way Dudley had meant it, which was to lighten the mood. He was sure Dudley hadn't realized until the words had left his mouth that that was very much a sore subject with Harry. Seeing the look of chagrin and embarrassment on Dudley's face did a lot to ease Harry's nerves.

"I want to go to Madam Malkin's, but first we need to find Sirius. I wonder where he went," Harry said as they left the store and ventured out onto the street.

"Maybe he went to the bank…"

Dudley tuned Harry and his friend out as they stood discussing where Mr. Black could be and soaked up the atmosphere and visuals around him. He was amazed. He had never seen anything like it. Stores lined the street with hardly a crack in between. Some buildings were two, three stories high with a store on each floor built from wood and old stone like he expected buildings from the medieval times had looked. The street was also full to brimming with witches and wizards dressed in highly colorful dresses and robes. Some also wore hats that he thought had simply been made up for the sake of evil witches for Halloween. Obviously that stereotype had been taken from the magical world and twisted. People were smiling all around, though some passed by in hurried fashion, faces creased with worry as their eyes roamed around the street looking for something or someone.

He also noticed the amount of attention Harry received and wondered why. There was not one person who passed who didn't look for longer than necessary at Harry, and his cousin had hidden his non-human traits once again. Harry continued to talk to George and was seemingly ignoring all the looks and nods thrown his way.

"Um, Harry? Why does everyone stare at you? Do you know all these people?" he asked

Harry snorted. "Course not."

"But they definitely know our Harry." George dropped back to stand next to him. "Let me tell you a little story, Duds. I'll just skim over his life and pin point the important events…"

Harry groaned and began to walk towards Madam Malkin's, only looking back once to make sure Dudley and George were still following, which they were. Dudley, he noticed, was hanging off of George's every word. As they walked down Diagon Alley, Harry was very much aware of his surroundings, and even though he didn't look it, he was watching everything and everyone around him. Already he spotted three Order members following them around, but they didn't concern him very much. There wasn't much the Order could do to him now anyway, not with Brumek and Ozemir always watching his back.

He looked back at one of the Order members. The wizard had the audacity to smirk at him and suddenly Harry had a strong urge to go chase down those Order members and rip their heads off right there in the middle of the street. He looked down at his growing claws and tried to push those urges away. Killing people in the middle of a crowded street would not help his cause in any way, but... it would be so much fun.

Those deadly thoughts were knocked from his mind when Sirius suddenly popped up and threw an arm around his shoulders and dragged him to his side. "Where were you?" Harry asked.

"Gringotts."
"No more deposits into my account I hope."

"No, I've learned my lesson." Sirius grinned. "I grabbed some money to buy a present for Luce."

Harry smiled. It was still a little strange to think that Sirius was married to Lucius Malfoy, and the fact that they were both very happy together. "That reminds me. What did you say today to make Lucius curse you?"

"Oh that." Sirius shrugged and laughed. "I love getting Lucius riled up. One of the easiest ways to do that is to display my affections for him in public. And you know how he is… so uptight, intent on maintaining the Malfoy standards and all that tripe. He hates PDA, so of course he got mad when I kissed him in front of all of you." Sirius turned clear eyes onto Harry. "You are very lucky, pup. Draco doesn't seem to have a problem showing people how much he loves you. So lucky…" he sighed and looked heavenward, and missed Harry's blush. "So why were you looking like you wanted to do murder just a minute ago?"

Harry's goofy grin instantly died a horrible death. "We're being followed by the Order. I hate the fucking Order! It's such a lie!"

"Don't worry, Harry. The Order is breathing its last breath. We'll destroy it soon enough," Sirius whispered. Harry nodded.

"I had no idea…" He heard Dudley murmur as the four of them entered Madam Malkin's. Harry took in Dudley's awed expression over the deeds he had done and allowed himself to internally gloat just a little bit. He liked the fact that Dudley was learning just how significant his life really was.

"What are we doing here, Harry? Didn't Draco buy enough to last several years the last time you were here?" George inquired.

"Please don't remind me. And he wants to go to Paris before school starts to get more clothes. I think I'll kill myself before that happens," he shot over his shoulder.

"Mr. Potter! Hello!" Madam Malkin waved cheerfully as she rushed through the store to meet Harry and his party.

"Good afternoon, Madam Malkin." Harry gave her a warm smile and waved back.

Dudley, still reeling from the revelations George had imparted to him, just watched as the owner of the shop came forward and practically fawned over his cousin. After everything George had said, it was no wonder why Harry was getting so much attention. Harry was an honest to God bloody hero! He was practically royalty. Dudley was feeling pretty stupid and insignificant all of a sudden.

"Would you like me to clear the store for you, Mr. Potter? I would be happy to do it."

"No!" Harry gasped and waved his hands in front of his face. "Draco shouldn't have asked you to do that the first time."

"I assure you, I have no problems doing it," she replied with a soft smile.

"No thank you. We're just here to get my cousin a cloak for everyday use. Nothing too extravagant… but I don't want him looking like a pauper either. Oh, and put this on my account, please." Madam Malkin's smile widened.

"Of course!" She turned to Dudley, who wasn't paying attention to their conversation and was busy ogling the clothing around him. "If you'll follow me Mr., err…." Harry had to nudge his cousin
before Dudley realized he was being spoken to.

"Dursley," he stammered and shrugged when Harry looked at him oddly.

"Well come along, Mr. Dursley and we'll get you set up." Dudley nodded and followed the lady to a back section where there was a large assortment of cloaks of every size, color, and patterns. "What color are your eyes?" Madam Malkin jerked his chin down so that she could have a look then hummed to herself and began routing through the cloaks. "Hazel. Plenty of colors to choose from then."

Dudley stood there and looked around waiting for her to make a choice. Since he wasn't buying and all the robes she was rummaging through all looked fairly decent, Dudley knew he wouldn't care which one she picked. Instead his attention was directed to his cousin, Mr. Black, and George Weasley. The three wizards had their heads close together and they seemed to be in an intense discussion. Occasionally one of them would raise their heads and peer at the door. Dudley shivered when he caught sight of Harry's face wearing a particularly dark look when he raised his head.

"Here you are. Try this one, Mr. Dursley."

Dudley turned back to Madam Malkin who held out a dark chocolate colored cloak with black lining and a silver clasp. Dudley didn't even have to put it on to want it. He tried it only to make sure it fit. Which it did, and perfectly. He smiled. "I'll take it."

"Wonderful."

"Can I wear it out?"

"Of course, Mr. Dursley. It goes on Mr. Potter's account. There is no need to pay at the counter."

"Thank you," he stammered, wondering just how wealthy Harry was.

Madam Malkin smiled before disappearing elsewhere. Dudley made his way back to his group. Once again feeling uncertain when all three turned and gave him a once over; all three wizards wearing skeptical masks over their faces. Finally Sirius nodded and turned to Harry.

"He'll do."

"Yeah." Harry grinned lopsidedly. "You actually don't look too bad, Big D." Harry felt he had every right to tease his cousin with the name. Harry planned to take full advantage and tease and taunt (lightheartedly, of course) as much as possible. "But it's so weird to see you in wizard apparel. Even if it is just a cloak. What do you think, George?"

"I reserve the right to hold judgment until further notice." Harry snorted. "Where to now?" George asked when they left the shop.

"Err…" Harry frowned and scratched the back of his neck. "I hadn't really thought about it. I mean I was going to show Dudley your store, which he really didn't get to look at all that much. Rather wait until Ron isn't there. And then here… later tonight we're going to the Den, of course… Ollivander's, if he chooses us…" Harry shrugged then said to Dudley, "there are other places, but I don't want to show you those unless you choose to become a wizard."

"What's Ollivander's?" Dudley asked.

"Where you get your wand," Sirius told him.
"We could show him Quality Quidditch Supplies."

"Brilliant!" Harry exclaimed. "I can't believe I didn't think of that. It's my favorite shop after all. And I can get a good look at the FireboltX."

"It's wicked! Are you going to get one?" George and Harry went on to take the lead, completely engrossed in a discussion over the newest broom, leaving Dudley to walk behind with Sirius.

"So have you made your decision yet?"

Dudley was startled for a moment, and then nodded. "My mind is pretty much made up."

Dudley figured it would do him no good to stay mad at the man over some stupid prank he'd pulled when he was younger. If his mum hadn't married his father, then he would never have been born after all. But he did promise himself that he would find out exactly what happened.

Sirius stopped Dudley from following Harry. "Remember, what you see around here is only half of it. Everything isn't all sunshine with us. We are basically at war, even though sides have been changed." Sirius discreetly motioned to a man a yard away that was pretending to window shop. "Not a friend," he whispered, and then he pointed to another man who was staring directly at them and Sirius noticed Dudley was getting most of the man's attention. "Also not a friend. Your cousin is a very powerful being now and he has powerful enemies…. Though I'm pretty sure no one can get to him, not really. I believe Draco would raze the earth should someone try to hurt him. I hope you realize just how lucky you are to still be alive, by the way."

"Yes, I know. I realize that… about everything you've just said. And about the danger…" Dudley shrugged. "My life's boring and I figured it was heading nowhere anyway. Harry's friends said they're kept on their toes because of the danger. I kind of like that idea."

Sirius stared. "That's a very foolish and reckless thought." He then grinned broadly and Dudley had the feeling he'd just passed a huge test with this bloke. "I like it! You surprise me."

"I think that's good also. Usually I'm very predictable."

"Why did you agree to this in the first place? Why are you trying to be part of Harry's life now? Do you honestly think you deserve it?" Sirius was seriously curious and wanted to make sure Dudley wasn't here just for kicks.

"Mr. Black, I know I don't deserve anything from Harry. I know that-Look, when my father left, I promised myself to become a different, better person. That's what I'm doing. That's why I'm trying to keep an open mind with all this," Dudley said, sweeping his gaze across Diagon Alley. "I'm taking this seriously. I don't want to disappoint Harry, Mum, or myself anymore."

Dudley looked over Mr. Black's shoulder and noticed the two men who been pointed out were now together and decidedly closer to them. Dudley wasn't sure whether or not he should point this out but when the wizards closed in some more, Dudley figured he'd better. "Err… Mr. Black? Those men you showed to me who are not friends seem to be getting closer."

"Are they now?" Sirius asked without turning to look.

Dudley nodded. "But they're still acting like they're only shopping. Wait… they're staring right at me."

Sirius cursed but did not look back. "I don't know how they could have found out so fast, but they must know who you are," he murmured and threw an arm over Dudley's shoulders and began to
walk. "We knew this was going to happen sooner or later. Just not this soon."

Dudley looked over his shoulder for a second. "They have their wands in their hands now."

Sirius cursed again and drew his wand. "Can't believe they'd try to come after you now, cheeky bastards. Well, kid, you wanted danger, now you've got it. You see that shop with the broom over the sign. You run straight there. Harry should be inside. You stick to him. Understand?" Dudley nodded. "I'll be right behind."

Sirius pushed and Dudley took off straight for the Quidditch shop though he looked over his shoulder as he went and saw Mr. Black waving at the men who had been following him. Dudley was almost to the door when he caught sight of two more wizards approaching Mr. Black from behind, both with their wands pointed at him.

"Hey! Mr. Black, watch out!" Dudley yelled and started to run back to him. He figured if he were going to make up for all of his misdeeds, now would be the good time to start. "Harry!" he yelled back over his shoulder and hoped his cousin heard him.

He ran into one of the wizards just as he spoke some weird word. As the wizard fell, a blue light flew from the tip of his wand and hit a witch who was quickly passing. She fell down to the ground unconscious. Dudley turned just as the other wizard pointed his wand at him, but Sirius cast Expelliarmus just in time to save Dudley from getting cursed.

Harry ran out then. He hadn't heard Dudley's call, being too engrossed with his inspection of the new broom and talking to George about it, but Ozemir had made him aware of the trouble going on outside. A vicious snarl tore from his lips as he raced out of Quality Quidditch Supplies and his blood boiled when he saw four Order members had gathered and were now circling Dudley and Sirius. He was nearly beyond control as he took the first step towards the group. The wind picked up into hurricane proportions and whipped through Diagon Alley scaring all those who hadn't already fled from the brewing trouble, and the rest of the Alley's patrons made haste to vacate the area. Only a small few hid within the shops around to watch the goings on. They were sorely disappointed. The doors were all suddenly locked and any and every window blackened when Brumek snapped his fingers, allowing no one to be able to see what was happening outside. Brumek did not want any humans to see any more power that the young one was displaying and would display. He didn't bother about Harry's friends. They knew what the young one was capable of, and they would keep their mouths shut about it or else. Ozemir hurried over to the unconscious witch and revived her. She looked about confused for a moment before running away without a thank you.

"STOP!" Harry yelled, and the Order members were easily and instantly cast immobile. George nearly had a heart attack when the road was hit several times by lightning over and over again. At least the lightning wasn't anywhere near where all this was going on. He thanked Merlin the Alley was deserted now. He didn't fancy himself or anyone else getting hit by Harry's furious temper.

"I'm going to rip every one of you to shreds," Harry growled as he slowly approached the Order members, walking easily through the turbulent winds. George sighed in relief when the lightning stopped.

"Harry, we're all right! You need to calm down now!" Sirius cried over the wind and jogged over to his fuming godson to try and block his way; but Harry ignored his words and pushed passed him. Dudley shook himself out of his stupor just as Sirius grabbed his arm and dragged him over to George.

"Watch him. I'm going to get Draco."
"Do you think that's a good idea?" George asked, still watching as Harry circled his frozen prey. "Draco will go mental."

"He shouldn't. They weren't after Harry. They decided to come after Dudley here."

"Still… Dud's is Harry's kin and Draco will take that as a direct action against Harry, ya know."

Sirius ran his hands through his hair as he sighed. "Yeah, you're probably right."

"Shouldn't we stop Harry?" Dudley asked and pointed. George and Sirius turned just as Harry picked up one of the Order by the neck and raised him a foot over his head as if he were a weightless doll. Dudley rubbed his eyes to make sure he wasn't imagining what he was seeing.

"Hmm… What's the first thing I should do to you mindless pigeons?" What do you think, Lovely? What should I do to them? Harry hissed and roughly shook the wizard in his grasp. Lovely raised her head from under Harry's chin and fixed her eyes on the frozen Order member in her master's hand.

You should let go of your inhibitions and do what comes naturally, Master.

Harry laughed in delight. Yes, you are right.

"The only one who has the power to calm the young one is his mate," Brumek announced from beside Sirius. The wizards turned to look at him; the Ukatae had spoken with an odd tone. Sirius looked around for the other guard and caught sight of Ozemir leaning against a wall, grinning and obviously having a wonderful time watching Harry lose his control.

Sirius turned back to George and Dudley. "Then it can't be helped. We need Draco."

"But what happens when Draco gets here and he loses control?"

"We're damned if we do and damned if we don't." Sirius shrugged. "Keep Dudley safe."

George nodded just as Sirius Apparated to Malfoy Manor. "We need to distract Harry until Draco can get here… Oi, Harry? What do you plan to do to them?"

"I'm going to suck them dry," Harry replied calmly, his eyes never leaving the frozen wizard within his grasp. He began to bring the wizard closer to his face and Dudley jumped forward.

"Hey, Harry! I've… uh… I've made my decision! Do you want to hear it?"

Finally Harry turned to look at Dudley and George, but he did not drop his intended victim. There was a frown on his face. "I imagine you want to go home now and forget about your magical inheritance. You haven't even been here for an hour and already you've been attacked." He turned back to the human he held and growled. "Fucking bastards."

"Actually, it's the opposite. I want to go get my wand now. Can you take me?" Dudley breathed a sigh of relief when Harry quickly shot him a grin. However, Harry did not drop the wizard.

"Honestly?"

"Yeah." Dudley and George moved forward slowly, pushing through the wind. "It's actually been exciting. Why don't you take me to get my wand now?" George had to give it to Dudley. He was doing a bang up job of distracting the irate Ukatae. But it didn't last long for Harry's attention returned to his captive and the three other frozen wizards lying around him.
"No, not now. After I've had my fun with this trash, then we'll go." His claws grew and began to imbed into the wizard's throat.

"He's seriously pissed," Dudley said.

"Definitely in the mind to kill those wizards. We can't let that happen. It'll ruin everything," George and Dudley moved forward until they were standing right next to Harry. "Listen, mate. You can't kill them. Remember the plans you've made. You kill them and you go straight to Azkaban, or worse. Your plans will be worthless then."

Harry laughed. "Azkaban cannot hold me, George."

"Nevertheless… Aren't you trying for unity? You can't do that if people think you'll kill without a thought."

"It's in my nature to kill as such. And I want to kill these humans, very slowly."

George sighed. It was pointless trying to talk some sense into the Gryffindor. Harry was definitely in full Ukatae mode. Both of his guards, Brumek and Ozemir looked incredibly pleased with their charge at the moment. They were just standing there watching. George noticed they'd hidden the pointy ears and shortened their hair. But other than that they looked the same.

"Can't you do anything?" George yelled, pulling Dudley with him as he approached the Ukatae guard.

"Why would we do that?" was Brumek's reply and he was smirking.

"Yes. Our little youngling is growing up. I'm so pleased," Ozemir said then sighed happily.

"What about the wind? Can you make it stop?"

"I don't want to. Let's not, Brumek. The young one's power is thrilling, isn't it?" he asked breathlessly. It was clear by Brumek's smirk that he was in a rare good mood due to Harry's display. He turned to Ozemir and his smoky eyes swept up and down Ozemir's slim form leaning against the wall. Ozemir's eyes widened in surprise. Brumek had never looked at him in that way before. A slow seductive smile graced Ozemir's lips as violet eyes locked with granite. Brumek's gaze sharpened and he took one step towards the flushed Scholar before stopping himself.

"No," he said more to himself and then turned his back on Ozemir and looked at George. "No. We'll do nothing. The young one is allowed to express himself however he wants."

"You two are mental." George rolled his eyes while Dudley stared at the Ukatae with incredulity. He had not learned yet exactly what they and Harry were and knew nothing about their natures, so he was understandably shocked at their attitudes.

Luckily Draco and Sirius returned then along with others. Sirius had convinced Draco to bring Tom and Hermione as well. He figured Tom and Hermione would be able to calm both Harry and Draco down if Draco lost his control as well. But Draco wasn't going to lose it and he immediately went to his mate and ripped the wizard Harry was holding out of his clawed hand. Everyone winced as Harry's claws ripped deeper gouges into the wizard's neck as he was forcibly pulled away. Draco threw the wizard down like trash before he grabbed Harry's shoulders roughly and hissed in his face.

"That's not what I expected Blondie to do," George said.

"He's not mad at Harry, is he?" Dudley asked.
"No. If he's angry at anyone it's the Order," Sirius explained. "I convinced Draco to hold his anger in check until in private. He's only distracting Harry."

"Are you alright?" Hermione asked Dudley as she came to stand beside him. "Sirius said they were after you."

"Hmm? Oh yeah. I'm fine thanks," he answered, then immediately went back to watching Harry and Malfoy. Harry was looking at the ground where the immobile wizards lay and growling at them.

"Look at me!" Draco snapped and shook Harry again. Once he had emerald eyes burning onto him Draco shook his head. "What do you think you are doing losing control in public like this?" he hissed, fully aware that he was being hypocritical though not bothered by it because he needed Harry to be calm. "You know better! You're putting everything we've worked for, everything we hope to achieve in jeopardy!"

"But they're asking for it," Harry whined. "They've been asking for it ever since we got here, Draco."

Draco's gaze softened and he caressed Harry's face. "I know, love. I know. But you can't kill them now. However," Draco lowered his voice and went on quickly when Harry's frown deepened, "I'll take these bastards home with me and you can play with them when you get home. And maybe you'd like to torture Aunt Trix a little too. You'd like that, yeah?" Harry's bright smile was answer enough.

Ozemir clapped his hands excitedly and came to stand beside Brumek, who refused to look at his fellow guard. Falde and Talyn came to join their comrades, and they looked pleased as well. Everyone except Harry and Draco looked at the elder Ukatae curiously.

"Just listen to them… they are completely Ukatae now!" Ozemir gushed and his comrades nodded.

"What do you mean? They were already Ukatae," Hermione said.

"Yes, but they still held lingering human traits," Talyn explained. "The human conscious. Now their consciences are Ukatae. Do you think your friends would think to take those humans," she pointed to the frozen wizards lying near the young Ukatae's feet, "home to be killed just because they're angry with them if they were still like they were before becoming Ukatae?"

"Even after the transformations they weren't like this," Tom mused.

"No, I suppose not," Hermione answered. Her eyes began to water as she watched Draco quickly drag the immobile wizards together and then he cast a Ukatae circle around them. He kissed Harry and told him to behave just before disappearing back to the manor with their prisoners. Falde and Talyn disappeared along with Draco.

"Blood, death, torture… The Ukatae are like children when it comes to these things. Like it's a child's game. I think that's what makes them so Dark and deadly," Tom speculated. He hoped Harry and Draco would let him watch and perhaps participate in the torture that would surely go on once Harry returned to Malfoy Manor. He was beginning to miss it. Moody had died too quickly.

"From now on, they'll be completely Ukatae. No more humanity left within," Brumek said. Sirius, George, Dudley, and Hermione looked at him in shock. His voice was just bursting with pride.

"But don't worry," Ozemir said when he caught sight of Hermione's forlorn look. "They are still your friends. They're just a little more blood thirsty."
Brumek snorted. "A little bloodthirsty?" he muttered.

"Quiet… I'm trying to make her feel better."

Hermione's eyes widened and her voice rose to hysterical proportions. "So is it now that they're going to be mindless dark creatures that only thrive in chaos and destruction?" Tom put a hand on her shoulder and squeezed, though he said nothing. He would, of course, enjoy seeing that.

"Excuse me, human… Do we look mindless to you? We still have beating hearts!" Brumek snapped. "If we were really that evil I'd rip your head and every other human's head off I see here without a thought. But we do have control and a conscious… just not a human one. Be calm already!"

"Come on, Dudley!" Harry called and waved his cousin over. "Let's get your wand!"

Hermione and Tom walked over to Harry with Dudley. "You're alright now, Harry?" Tom asked.

"Perfectly fine." Harry turned his eyes to Hermione. "Don't look like that, Mione. It can't be helped. And it's not like they're innocent. Who knows what they would have done to Dudley had they been able to take him. As far as I'm concerned no one in the Order is innocent. Dudley is the innocent one and they were coming after him. Just like they went after you, Luna, Dean, and Neville. They don't deserve mercy."

By this time the wind had calmed down, the shops' doors were unlocking, and people were starting to come back out. It wouldn't take long before Diagon Alley was teeming with patrons again. Especially when word spread about what had happened. People wouldn't be able to contain their curiosity and would make the trip to the Alley just to see if they could discover more about what had gone on.

"I know Harry. It's just happening so fast."

"I'm sorry and I'll try to control myself around you."

"There will be no need for control when you are around me, I assure you," Tom said and grinned along with Harry.

"You're incorrigible," Hermione replied with an eye roll. "Come on. We need to get to Snape Manor." She hooked her arm through the one Tom held out to her, they both smiled at Harry and then Apparated away. Harry still had trouble sometimes believing how close those two had grown together. Especially considering who the two of them were.

"Why don't these people seem afraid of you?" Dudley asked, referring to the remaining customers of Diagon Alley.

"Are you afraid of me?"

"Am I breathing?"

Harry snorted. "I guess it's because they don't know what I'm capable of now. They only know about the Boy-Who-Lived, Savior of the Wizarding World." Harry leaned in closer to his cousin and whispered, "a lot of people can't believe that I've gone Dark. It would mean the end of the world to them." He shook his head and sneered. "Stupid idiots."

Harry turned and began walking down the street and Dudley made sure to keep close to him. It was clear to Dudley that if he wanted to remain safe he would need to stick to Harry like glue. At least until he learned how to defend himself properly. People were understandably giving them a wide
berth. As he observed, Dudley realized that he was wrong and so was Harry. People were afraid of him.

They made it to Ollivander's without a problem, but before they went in, Harry drew Dudley to stand beside the door. "You sure? You're absolutely certain?"

Dudley rolled his eyes. "Yeah, I'm sure. I don't want to have to say it again."

"Explain why," Harry demanded in a harsh tone that had Dudley flinching.

"Because I like what I've seen and how I feel right now."

Harry nodded and finally pushed open the door, allowing Dudley to walk in ahead of him. Sirius and George followed after Harry, both unusually quiet. Harry was sure they were still letting the shock of his complete transformation sink in. Harry was feeling very, very happy at the moment, and he knew it was because he had prisoners waiting to be killed. He knew before today he wouldn't have been so happy to have people tortured and killed, but now he felt completely like a Dark being, he understood his nature now and accepted without worry. What did he have to worry about? He was *Ukatae*. He could do anything. He wasn't human, he had power. He could do anything…

"Mr. Potter. Nice to see you again. You haven't broken your wand have you?" Mr. Ollivander asked after coming to the front when he heard the bell on the door go off.

"No. My wand is just fine," Harry replied with a genuine smile.

"Oh. Good, good. It would have been a terrible shame."

Harry was going to tell the man that he really didn't need his wand anymore, but decided against it. The less people who knew that the better. "We're here to pick up a wand for my cousin."

The old wizard raised an eyebrow in surprise. "Cousin, eh? Did not see that one coming."

"Tell me about it," both Harry and Dudley answered together, and then looked at each other in amusement.

"Well let me see…" Mr. Ollivander gave Dudley the once over, nodded, the moved to go look over the long slim wand boxes along the wall behind him. "Hmm… We'll start with oak, I think." He lifted his hand far above his head and brought down a dusty black box. "Oak, 10 ½ inches, unicorn hair, and rather bendy…" He opened the box and held it out to Dudley who reached out without hesitation to pick the wand up. He flexed his fingers around it before shivering uncontrollably as a warm prickly sensation wrapped around his entire body. Dudley hadn't ever felt anything so brilliant.

"First one." Mr. Ollivander nodded and smiled. "Very good. Very good, indeed."

"You're good, Mr. Ollivander," Harry replied.

"I am, yes. That will be thirteen Galleons."

Dudley watched Harry pull out a velvet sack bursting with money. Harry then pulled out a handful of large gold coins. "These are Galleons," Harry said to him as he counted out thirteen coins and laid them on the counter.

Once out of the shop, Dudley studied his wand, and then looked at Harry. "That was unexpectedly simple."
"What? Did you expect pomp and circumstance? Expect the Minister of Magic himself to come
down and give you a wand?"

Dudley ignored his sarcastic tone. "There's a Minister of Magic? Like the Prime Minister?"

"Sure. And just like any politician, he's useless. He's dragging our nation through the mud."

"Harry…” Sirius came up and wrapped his godson in a one armed hug. "Don't get yourself worked
up again. Besides, that's on the agenda as well. Relax."

Harry sighed. "Yeah, alright."

"Mum!" Dudley burst through the door, excitement clearly written across his face. "Mum!" Harry
followed after him, shut the door, and started to discretely cast protection wards around the place.

"What is it? What's wrong, Dudders?" Petunia rushed into the living room from the kitchen, but
stopped short when she saw the smile on her son's face. She approached him and he lifted his wand
up to show her. Harry chuckled. It was like a new toy, it seemed. That thought wiped the smile off
Harry's face.

"It's not a toy, Dudley. You can't treat a wand like you have with your other possessions. You can't
just get bored with it and throw it away. It's a part of you now… another limb. A wand cannot be
used callously. It must remain on your person always. Do you understand? This is not a game."

"I understand, Harry."

"It is good to see you excited again though. I assume everything went well," she said smiling at both
her son and nephew now.

"Yeah!"

Harry and Dudley decided to keep her in the dark about what happened with the Order members.
Nothing bad happened so there wasn't a need to get Petunia worked up about it. "Harry took me to
the Wizarding market and there were dozens of shops full of wicked things… and flying brooms!"

Once again, Harry started to chuckle. After Ollivander's, Harry had dragged his cousin back to
Quidditch Quality Supplies and gushed all about the Firebolt Express and surprisingly he and
Dudley had bonded again over the broom and over Harry explaining the game of Quidditch. Harry
was surprised about how enthusiastic Dudley was over the game once he'd understood the rules.
Harry, Dudley, Sirius, and George had gone to a café for an early supper and they'd all gotten into a
discussion over the Wizarding game and by the time they left Dudley couldn't wait to play
Quidditch.

Harry had Sirius and George distract Dudley and hurried back to the store and ordered Dudley a
Firebolt as a surprise. Draco would surely kill him for that, but he didn't care. He couldn't believe
how much fun he'd had with Dudley during these few hours and how easy it was to get along with
him now. Though he was sure a lot had to do with the fact that Dudley was a mite bit scared of him.
But that only added to Harry's pleasure. Which was a very strange feeling.

"I'll tell you all about it later, Mum. We just came back so I can change before we go to this
Wizarding club." Dudley turned and leered at Harry. "He keeps complaining about being away from
his darling Draco."

"Shut up!" Harry said, blushing and staring at his toes. The soft smile never left Petunia's face as she
watched Dudley hurry through the flat to his room to change.

"Harry… Thank you."

Harry looked up in surprise and confusion. "For what?"

"I haven't seen him genuinely happy like this in so long… and you are giving us a chance…" Petunia's eyes filled with water. "I don't understand you. Why are you being so kind to us?"

"Because I can. Because I want to. I don't exactly understand why though. I don't really want to look into it. Not now."

Petunia nodded, as there wasn't much else to say. She understood what he was thinking. He had decided to keep them in his life. There would be time for them to get to know each other and figure out why.

Harry?

Harry was immediately alert upon hearing the anxiety in his mate's voice. Petunia was perplexed when her nephew looked suddenly very worried. "Excuse me, Aunt Petunia. I need to speak to Draco," he said and she nodded as Harry turned away and sat on the couch. She became concerned when his eyes glazed over and he stared off into nothingness. How was Harry talking to Mr. Malfoy? She supposed it was another power he possessed, and thought to ask him about it later.

Harry sat down and ignored everything around him. What's wrong?

I've done something incredibly stupid. Harry's alarm doubled when Draco's tone was clearly laced with panic.

The reception area of St. Mungo's was relatively empty when Draco arrived, which greatly surprised him, though he did not let it show on his face as he strode up to the reception desk. Once there he stared blankly at the Welcome Witch behind it who had her face hidden behind a copy of Witch Weekly and it looked like she was prepared to ignore the world until her shift ended. It was the same witch who dared to touch Harry the time they'd come to get his eyes fixed. Draco glowered as his claws grew. He was not in the mood for this. Not after having to go to Diagon Alley to retrieve those bastards who dared go near Harry.

He set his claws upon the desk and drew them across the surface and watched as the witch shuddered upon hearing the screeching sound his claws made. The witch dropped her magazine and her eyes widened upon seeing Draco.

"Now that I've acquired your attention. Have Healer Bluemoon notified that I am here to see her."

"Mr. Malfoy, the Healer-In-Charge is extremely busy. Perhaps you would like to make an appointment."

Draco swallowed the enormous urge he had to impale the stupid witch. If she knew who he was then she should know better than to decline a Malfoy anything. "No, I would not like to make an appointment. I do not need an appointment. You tell Bluemoon I'm here and she'll be more than happy to see me."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Malfoy. Without an appointment."

"Let me ask you a question," Draco began lowly, spreading out his fingers on the counter and
leaning forward. "Do you like your job? No, never mind… of course you don't like your job. Who would?" he sneered down at her. "How about the fact that you are alive and well, hmm? If you want to continue to live a healthy and pain free life, I suggest you alert Bluemoon of my presence. Immediately."

The witch backed up her chair in fright and immediately began nodding her head. "I'll just get her then, Mr. Malfoy. Sorry to make you wait."

"Very good. And for future reference… never say no to a Malfoy. Is that understood?"

"Y-Yes, s-sir! I'm sorry, sir!"

Draco turned on his heels and walked away from the reception desk. It didn't take very long at all before Amortia appeared, and as usual she had a big smile on her face. "Draco! Whatever are you doing here?"

"To see Mr. Lovegood. I wanted to see if I could heal him myself. And to take another sample of blood if my healing abilities will not work on him."

Amortia smiled. "Of course."

"I feel kind of stupid for not thinking about trying to heal him before now. But I've only ever healed Harry. And this would be a different type of healing altogether," he went on as they made their way through the hospital. Draco shrugged, "I thought I might give it a try."

Amortia glanced at him and her grin widened. "Did Harry send you?"

"No. The sexy arse is quite busy misbehaving in public. Why do you ask?"

Amortia laughed. "You're not exactly friends with the Lovegood girl," she explained while waving away a couple of people waiting for the lift, making sure she and Draco had it all to themselves. "And you're not exactly the type of person to go around freely helping those who have no meaning for you."

"Harry loves Looney." When Amortia raised an inquiring eyebrow, Draco shook his head. "Familial love. Stupid Gryffindor tendencies…"

"I see."

"And Tom was the one who suggested I might be able to help Lovegood with my power."

"Did he?" Amortia sounded surprised. "Why would he care?"

Draco shrugged. "He didn't give a reason. It was an offhand suggestion."

Amortia led Draco through a corridor and into a private ward holding the special treatment patients and into Mr. Lovegood's private room, which also included a private waiting area for family and good friends.

"Hello, Luna. I've brought you a visitor." Amortia went over to the bed and began waving her wand over Mr. Lovegood's comatose form, frowning as she did so. There had been no improvement, and it seemed his body was getting worse. Nothing she or the other Healers did could stop his body from shutting down part by part.

"Draco! It's lovely to see you!" Luna sent an airy wave his way from where she sat by the window.
Draco ignored the fact that he'd never given Looney permission to use his first name.

"Lovegood," he replied curtly. Draco didn't want to hang around any longer than absolutely necessary and once Amortia nodded to him, he walked over to the bed and placed his hands onto Mr. Lovegood's chest, not bothering to inform Luna what he was trying to do to her father.

"It won't work," Luna said softly and smiled sadly at Draco when he looked up in surprise at her. "Nothing will work. This is supposed to happen. I'm old enough now."

Amortia sat down in the extra chair across from Luna. "What do you mean?" she asked softly. "You knew your father was going to get sick? You're old enough for what?" Amortia waved for Draco to continue with what he was trying to do.

Luna stared off over Amortia's shoulder, her eyes unusually wide and round and sighed. "We wanted to stay at home, you see, because this can't be stopped. But Dumbledore, once he found out Daddy was ill, convinced Daddy that being cared for here was best. Daddy thought about it and eventually agreed because he didn't want Death Eaters to get to me before it was time. Silly Daddy! So here we are." Luna turned her attention back to the window. "But I'd really like to go home. And if Daddy were awake, I'm sure he'd say the same thing. He only came here so that I could be safe. If he knew about the kidnapping, he'd want us to go home. It's almost time. Soon, Dumbledore will not be able to touch me."

Amortia was having trouble digesting what Luna was saying, or rather what she wasn't saying. She did understand that Mr. Lovegood, if he hadn't been in a coma, would have wanted to go home to die. That was understandably clear.

"Nothing. Nothing is happening," Draco murmured in frustration after a few minutes. He couldn't feel the illness inside Mr. Lovegood, could not feel any pain, nothing.

"Thank you for trying," Luna said, and then went back to staring out of the window. Draco watched her for a minute with a frown on his face. Why was she taking this so well? Her father was going to die. Didn't she care?

"Draco, a private word." Amortia and Draco left the room. "Something strange is going on," she said once the door was shut behind them. They were in the small waiting room that Amortia had securely warded to keep anyone from overhearing their conversation.

"This concerns Looney Lovegood. Of course it's strange."

"Be serious please." Draco stared blankly at her. He was being completely serious. "I think Luna and her father should be moved back home."

Draco sighed and swept away a lock of hair that had fallen over his eye. "Harry would kill me if I allowed that to happen. The Lovegoods have more protection here, being surrounded by all these patients and Healers."

"But they need a better environment. Luna said Dumbledore convinced her father that he should come here instead of staying at home. It's obvious nothing can be done for Mr. Lovegood unless a new cure is found. He doesn't need to be here for that."

"What do you suggest I do, Bluemoon?" Draco snapped impatiently. "Looney needs protection from Dumbledore. She can't have the best protection if she's left home alone with an invalid father."

Amortia smiled mischievously at him and Draco knew he would not like what was about to be said. And then he felt the amusement coming off her in waves and guessed exactly what she was thinking.
He began to shake his head, looking positively horrified.

"No! No, no, no, no. No!"

"Stupid Bluemoon and her stupid ideas!" Draco snarled as he made his way through Malfoy Manor, heading straight for his father's private study.

"It's not really a stupid idea, young one," Talyn said from behind him.

"You're not supposed to be seen or heard!" He snapped without turning around. "For once follow the rules."

Talyn gasped and then began to pout, but did as was ordered and reverted back into her Shadow, while Falde mentally laughed. Though he found it telling that Talyn immediately obeyed the young one without pause. He had a feeling she hadn't obeyed willingly. Excitement, an emotion he hadn't felt in so long, filled him. He itched to find those marks. He still had not inspected the marks and had planned to do it as soon as Draco returned from the hospital. But since the young one was in such a foul mood, he decided to wait until both young ones were together and a bit calmer.

Draco walked on, stewing in his thoughts until he came to his father's private study. He knocked on the door and waited. When Lucius opened the door, he raised an eyebrow upon seeing the annoyed look in his son's eyes.

"Well? What has been done about Severus' position as Head of Slytherin?"

"It has been secured," Lucius drawled. "Anything else?"

"Yes there is," Draco ground out. He really, really did not want to do this and the only reason why he was accepting Amortia's ridiculous suggestion was because Harry would be very pleased with it. Draco would make sure he was rewarded for this. Oh yes and the reward would be monumental. Harry wouldn't be able to walk for a bloody week by the time he was finished with the green-eyed demon. "The Lovegoods will be residing with us until Looney goes to school and her father has died."

"Excuse me?"

"Have the house elves make up a room for them. Bluemoon is bringing them in an hour."

Draco nodded once to his father and then Apparated away. Lucius blinked at the spot where his son had been standing. The Lovegoods? What the blazing hell was going on here? Lucius suddenly frowned when he realized he'd just been given a direct order to follow by his son. Lucius sniffed and shut himself back into his study. He would be having a word with Draco the next time they met. Draco may be a very powerful Dark creature now, but he would need to be reminded that Lucius was still his father and he would not tolerate such disrespect.

Draco realized this once he'd Apparated into Severus' manor. He knew his father was probably furious, and he wasn't so stupid to think he would get away with it either.

"It didn't work," he said as way of greeting once he'd entered Severus' potions lab down in the bowels of the Manor. Hermione's shoulders dropped at his words and to distract her Draco handed over the new vial of blood he'd gotten from Mr. Lovegood before departing St. Mungo's. It did the trick, as she immediately squared her shoulders and got to work.

Tom eyed Draco for a moment, taking notice of the blond's tense shoulders and the permanent sneer
gracing his face. "Something wrong?"

Draco hissed before answering, drawing to him the eyes of Hermione, and of Severus who had been ignoring him for a potion. "The Lovegoods are being moved into Malfoy Manor for their ease and protection." Hermione began to nod as if she knew that would happen all along. Draco bit down on a scathing know-it-all comment.

"And why does this have you so bothered?" Tom ventured, knowing full well that keeping Draco's mind on the topic would only anger him.

"Because Loony is crazy! Because I'm only allowing it to please Harry."

"You don't want to please Harry?"

"No! I mean, yes… I'm just…"

"You're not used to caring so much for another person," Severus said softly, understanding perfectly.

"It doesn't feel like me."

Hermione snorted and rolled her eyes. "Harry wouldn't want you to do things just to please him if it makes you uncomfortable or makes you feel like you are not being true to yourself."

"And I know this, Hermione. But I still can't help myself when it comes to him. I don't mind it. I like to please him, but…"

"What's so bad about Luna, anyway?"

"She's crazy!" Draco exploded throwing his hands up in the air for emphasis.

"Tom's crazy too… You are. Don't glare at me," Hermione said when Tom narrowed his eyes on her. "You get along fine with Tom. Besides, Luna's not really crazy. She's just different. It's obvious she sees things others do not. Just because we can't see it doesn't mean it's not there. It doesn't mean she's crazy."

"Very true," Tom agreed.

Draco's swirling silver eyes narrowed on the Dark Lord and he snarled, "don't act like you know anything about Lovegood! You're only agreeing with Hermione because you're in love with her."

Total silence.

It seemed as if all four persons in the room stopped breathing and the temperature dropped drastically. Hermione found herself shivering. She supposed that could have been from the look both Tom and Draco were giving each other rather than the temperature drop. She felt warmth at her back and instantly leaned back against Severus' chest. For warmth and protection. It was understandable why she was frightened. Angry, both Tom and Draco could do a lot of damage.

"Don't say such things, Draco," she whispered and was comforted when Severus wrapped an arm around her waist.

Tom's face reflected all the rage he felt and he slowly drew his wand. "I suggest thinking before you speak. Do not presume to know how I feel for anyone, baby Malfoy. You can't feel my emotions. I'm strong enough to block you. And if you ever say anything about my friendship with Hermione again I'll find some way around the Wizard's Oath I took and I will kill you. Is this understood?"
Draco's face was contorted with two expressions. Shock at himself for losing his temper and control, for having said such a thing. And fury at being called baby Malfoy and being threatened. However, he did not doubt Tom's abilities and knew that if Tom wanted to, he could probably find a way around the Oath even though no other wizard had ever accomplished such a feat... But this was the Dark Lord.

"You love her," Draco said simply, unsure why he wasn't apologizing like he should and continuing on with this line of discussion.

"Not like that," Tom hissed and before he did something stupid, he stored his wand and quickly left the potion lab. Hermione pulled away from Severus and looked at her lover. When he gave her a soft smile and nodded, she smiled back and then rushed after Tom. She glared madly at Draco as she passed him.

"Well done, Draco. Well done." Severus' voice dripped with disdain. He sneered at his godson before turning back to his potion. He knew full well what Draco's insensitivity could have produced concerning Tom Riddle. Hopefully Hermione would be able to sort the Dark Lord out.

Draco took in a shuddering breath before lowering himself onto a stool across the room, and stared at Severus' tense shoulders. He twisted around on the stool after a minute, placed his elbows on the worktable and lowered his head into his hands.

Harry?

What's wrong?

I've done something incredibly stupid.

Hermione rushed out of the potion lab, every cell in her body screaming furiously at Draco Malfoy as she rushed after the Dark Lord, hoping with all her might that Draco had not ruined everything. Tom, despite being the Dark Lord, was very delicate now, having just recently regained his right mind and soul. And he was eighteen. His emotions, ones he'd probably never allowed himself to experience before, must be running rampant. She couldn't allow Tom to close himself off as he had the first time he'd been young and had become an easy target for Dumbledore to manipulate. Closed off, they couldn't get Tom to open up and enjoy life, enjoy the family he finally had and reach the goal he'd always wanted. Hermione wanted that above all else. She wanted Tom to know he had a family and was supported and to be truly happy with his existence. Having his feelings thrown back in his face like that could only affect him in a very negative way.

"Tom!" she cried out when she saw him down the corridor, preparing to climb the stairs.

Tom stopped but did not turn and face her. "I'm not fit company right at the moment, Hermione," he said stiffly as she came up to him.

"Tom... Please look at me," Hermione implored. Tom closed his eyes and felt lower than he'd ever felt before. He felt like a coward. Hermione huffed and rounded him until they were face to face and she touched Tom's arm. "Draco's a git. We all know this. He has no right to talk about other people's feelings."

"I don't want to talk about this or him," Tom replied in a low dark voice that had Hermione shivering again. He moved away and continued up the stairs. Hermione worried her bottom lip for a second before following.

"You need to relax!" she said in false cheer as she bounded up the steps beside him. "Let's go out."
"I don't need you worrying about me!" he spat and finally turned to face her. "I don't need anything from you!"

"I see." Tears sprang to her eyes upon hearing the disdain dripping from his voice. "Draco says one inaccurate thing, has you thinking about how you've been feeling, and you're going to push all that away because it scares you."

"I am the Dark Lord in case you have forgotten," he hissed. "Nothing scares me."

The look he was giving her was so full of disgust that she gasped. She didn't realize all that disgust displayed on his face was for himself and in no way for her.

"I guess it was only a matter of time before you remembered I'm a Mudblood," Hermione said softly. Tom cursed and grabbed her arm when she made to leave him. "I don't ever want to hear you say that about yourself again."

"You're hurting me," she replied flatly. Tom lightened his grip but did not let go.

"He's right, you know?" he said and Hermione's eyes widened.

"You're… You're in love with me?"

Tom shook his head. "I'm not capable of such an emotion. But Draco made me realize that I'm letting other kinds of feelings overrule everything else. Feeling like that makes a wizard weak! I cannot be seen as weak!"

"No one would ever think of you as weak," Hermione replied sternly. "And if they do we'll just have to show them how very wrong they are."

"You haven't answered my question."

A slight grin formed on Tom's face before his eyes turned curious. "Why did you befriend me? You, Harry, Draco… You were all set to die by my hands, you know."

"Yes. We were quite certain of it." Hermione sniffed, giving him a disapproving look before taking his arm so that she was leading him down a corridor. "And when you made that alliance with Harry and Draco, we were all aware that you had only ceased fire because you needed something," she ended when they reached the Floo Room. "Malfoy Manor. I'll be right behind you."

"All in good time. Off you go."

Tom mumbled something under his breath that sounded something like know-it-all surrogate mothers, and Hermione just grinned as she watched the green fire whisk him away. She sighed in relief and then followed directly after and found Tom waiting. She didn't speak to him; she simply smiled and made sure he followed beside her. Every once and a while he'd look over at her with an inquiring quirk of his brow, but Hermione simply smiled and continued on until they were standing outside of his door.

"And what are we doing here?"

"Let's go in and I'll show you."

Hermione had a wicked glint in her eyes that was beginning to unnerve him. He stood there staring at the closed door, while Hermione waited for him to open it. He very much wanted to know what
she was planning before he opened the door. He was a young man after all and a sudden blush crossed his face as several indecent images appeared in his head. Each one just as disturbing as the next. Hermione was a lovely young woman, but he didn't think of her like that. He could never think of her like that.

"Get your mind out of the gutter, Tom Riddle. I'm not about to go in there and have my wicked way with you!"

Tom was so relieved he blew out a breath and then immediately opened the door allowing Hermione to precede him into his darkened quarters.

"I realize you are still Lord Voldemort, the Dark Lord…" she faced him in the dark, "but is it necessary for you to live in this darkness day and night."

Tom smirked. "I'm not in here day and night." He waved his wand and the room was immediately illuminated from the half dozen candles and oil lamps set about.

Hermione made a noncommittal sound and approached his closet. "Have you burned the muggle clothes Draco bought you? I hope you haven't."

"What does that have to do with the question I asked you and are you going to answer said question?"

"Of course I will," she called out from within the large walk in closet.

"Well?" Tom's patience was slipping and by the laughter he heard, he knew that Hermione knew so as well. He resisted the urge to roll his eyes and instead chose to sit down and wait, wondering what the Gryffindor was up to.

"Here we are!" She came out holding a blue silk shirt and black slacks, both of which had fit almost too snugly for comfort when Draco had made him try the clothes on.

"Here we are what?"

"Put them on. Honestly." She shook her head in exasperation.

Tom narrowed his eyes on the offending garments. "No."

"Yes."

"I will not." Tom crossed his arms over his chest and began to glare at the witch. He was the Dark Lord. No way in hell was he going to voluntarily wear muggle clothes out. The only reason why he tried them on was because Draco wouldn't shut up otherwise, and the blond could be really very annoying when he got started.

"You will if you want an answer to your question." Hermione set the clothes on his bed. "I'm going to get changed. I'll expect you outside of my room in twenty minutes." With that she left him gaping after her and quietly shut the door.

Tom went back to glaring at the clothes. "I'm not going to do it!" he snapped.
Half an hour gone found Hermione sitting at her vanity tapping her fingers upon it with impatience. She was already dressed, had her hair finished, and was raring to go. All she needed now was a stubborn Dark Lord. But apparently Tom had no intention of wearing the clothes she'd chosen. Hermione was just about to give up when someone pounded on her door.

"It's about bloody time..." she trailed off as she caught sight of the darkest look she'd ever seen plastered on Tom's face. On a brighter note, he was wearing the clothes she'd laid out. And he looked very, very yummy. She suspected he was looking ridiculously angry because he knew he looked good. And he looked good in muggle clothing.

"It's not as if you've never had to wear clothes like this before."

"I haven't."

"Whatever, it doesn't matter." She wasn't about to point out that he used to live in a muggle orphanage. "You look spectacular. Time to go," she said, sweeping past him.

"Where do you think you're going dressed like that?" Tom's outraged voice echoed through the hall. Hermione turned around to see him pointing a very rigid finger at her.

"You can't go around dressed like that. Severus will go mad if he knows you're out in that. And with me."

"Afraid of the Potions Master?"

"No, but you should be." Tom dropped his arm and joined Hermione as she continued on down the hall. Tom remained silent as they approached the Entrance Hall, but Hermione could tell he was very edgy what with the way he kept glancing left, right, and over his shoulder as if watching for someone.

"What are you doing?" she finally asked.

Tom looked startled for a minute and then scowled. "I don't know."

"Obviously what I said earlier at Severus' house was the truth. You need to relax." She pushed open the front doors and they walked out. "Though where I'm taking you probably won't relax you... well, at least not at first."

"Where are we going? And why can't you just answer my question already?"
"We're going somewhere fun! It's a surprise. You like surprises," Hermione said once they'd made it past the wards to where they could Apparate. Tom's eyes narrowed on her. He didn't like this one bit. Where the hell... Before he could ask, Hermione wrapped her fingers around his bicep and Apparated them away.

"Mrs. Weasely did say you needed to socialize more," Hermione said with a quiver in her voice as they stood just inside the club. She was trying very hard to keep from laughing at Tom's expression. His mouth was opened in horrifying shock.

"Something must have happened to your intelligence! You can't bring me here!"

"But I already have. And no one will recognize you."

Hermione turned and waved at Dirk as she approached the bar, wondering whether Tom would follow or go back home. She hoped he wouldn't leave. He did need to relax after all, and having fun at the Wizard's Den was a good place to achieve such a thing. And if he didn't know how to have fun then she was determined to teach him. They were fairly early so the club had yet to fill with patrons. Hermione thought this was excellent, as Tom could grow used to the club before it was jam-packed. If he stayed.

"Miss. Granger. Lovely to see you," Dirk said with a pearly white smile.

"You too."

"Your man looks like he's been turned to stone."

Hermione turned around and chuckled. At least Tom hadn't left yet. "He's not my man. We're just very good friends. He doesn't get out much so mix us up a couple of AK's please, Dirk. He needs to relax."

"Sure thing." Dirk looked over her shoulder and Hermione noticed the slow appraisal he was giving Tom. Her amusement doubled when Dirk's eyes gradually glazed over with lust. "You sure you two aren't together?"

"Quite sure. But don't get your hopes up. I don't think he swings that way. And he can be very, very scary, so I don't think you should flirt to test him either."

Tom had finally broke out of his stupor and hissed as he came to stand beside her. He gave Dirk a dismissing glance before glaring at Hermione once more. "Hermione, I must protest!"

"Why? You wanted an answer to your question, didn't you? I will give it here." Hermione turned back to Dirk, who was making Tom's drink without having to look at what he was doing, thus leaving him free to stare at Tom. Seemed he wasn't going to listen to her warning. She couldn't blame the bloke though. Tom was very striking.

Hermione scanned the half empty club and lifted his chin. "I do not socialize with the lower class," he said disdainfully and Hermione rolled her eyes.

"He's associated with Draco, isn't he?" Dirk asked Hermione as he pushed the bright green drink in front of the Dark Lord. Tom turned cold eyes onto Dirk and answered for her.

"Do you want to die?" he asked with a flat voice and a black look.

Hermione quickly handed Tom his drink, scooped up her own, the pushed Tom away from the bar. Before leaving she smirked at the shivering barkeep. "I told you he was scary. At least he asked if
you wanted to die instead of just killing you. That was a first."

Dirk shook his head. "He wouldn't really…"

Hermione pinned him with a dead serious expression. "Yes. Yes, he would."

"Who is he?"

Hermione smirked. "Do you really want to know?"

Dirk looked across the room to where Tom was just settling into a booth in a very dark and secluded corner. The wizard, whomever he was, was swallowed completely by the darkness except for his eyes. Dirk could see the wizard's cold shining eyes very clearly and they seemed to whisper death. Again, Dirk shuddered. "No, I don't think I do."

Hermione nodded and went to join her brooding friend. "Drink up!" Tom sighed and picked up his drink and began to sip at it, once in a while sending a death glare at any person who dared pass their table. "And try to keep your homicidal tendencies to a minimum while we're here."

She spoke with amusement, but Tom knew she was being serious as well. "You know I'm almost the same person as before I obtained this body. How could you allow me to become your friend? You know I'm still bloodthirsty; I still like to take lives, dabble in any and all Dark magic, torture… Why are we friends, Hermione?" he demanded, sounding annoyed and frustrated because he couldn't understand.

Hermione took her time answering, because she had to think upon the answer. "Well you took the initiative, didn't you, Tom? You approached me. You made yourself approachable… to me."

Tom nodded slowly. "I… I don't know why."

"I suspect we have a connection," Hermione said thoughtfully after she'd gulped down her first drink. She waved at Dirk for two more. "No, not like that." She shook her head when Tom's eyes widened in alarm. "We're each meant for someone else."

Hermione snorted before downing the rest of his drink. The drink was relaxing him, though one would never know with the way he continued to sit ramrod straight. Hermione could only tell because of the softness around the eyes. "As I said before, I am not suited for such an emotion. I'm a selfish bastard, Hermione. I care for no one but myself."

"That's rubbish!" She slapped her hand down on the table and then giggled. Harry was right; the Avada Kedavra was a very strong drink. She was already giggling. "Stop lying, you big git!"

"Big git? Is that the best you can come up with? You apprentice under Lord Voldemort and big git is the best you can do? I'm very disappointed in you," Tom finished and once again began to glare when a woman started to approach their table. It was obvious she'd wanted a word with Tom. That is until Tom glared more death at her. She quickly turned around and disappeared.

"Maybe we shouldn't refer to you as the Dark Lord and Lord Voldemort while we're here. And you should definitely stop referring to yourself in the third person," she whispered before raising her finger to her lips and then giggling some more. Tom watched her with obvious amusement. Two more Avada Kedavra's popped up in front of each of them and both eagerly snatched one of the drinks up. "Besides, we're getting off track. If you cared for no one then how can you say I'm your friend, hmm? Is that a lie? Do you not consider me a friend? Or are you simply using me?"

"Firstly, I threw a confunded bubble around us. Anyone who overhears us speaking will only think
"we're speaking gibberish. Nothing will be discernible. And secondly, no I do not lie when I say we are friends. I believe you are the first real friend I've ever had. And what's stranger is the fact that we began that friendship even before I got this body. I spied on you a little bit before I approached you and Ginevra in the library that day." Tom frowned at the green concoction in his hand. It was obviously loosening up his tongue. But he was glad to have admitted that when Hermione smiled brightly at him.

"In fact, when you were kidnapped," he went on, unable to help himself, "I don't believe I've ever been that afraid for another living being before. Not comfortable with those types of feelings," he muttered into his cup before drinking.

"And how do you feel about Harry and Draco?"

Tom scowled. "I'd rather not talk about Draco right now. In fact I think we should let go of this subject altogether."

"If you answer that last question, I promise to let it go."

"If I answer, can I go home without you being disappointed?"

"No."

Tom swept his hand through his hair and stared up at the twirling flashing lights above them. "I suppose I see them as my family now… my brothers?" Hermione ahhed and sighed. Tom ignored this. "I've seen what's in their minds about me. And that is the feeling I've gotten from them. A little overwhelming let me tell you. But I can't deny it because it's there, in all three of us." He leant forward against the table on one arm; with that hand still in his hair he gave her a lopsided grin. Any woman with a pulse would have been affected and Hermione felt herself blush when his intense brown eyes landed on her. They were clearer than she'd ever seen them and there was clearly affection behind his gaze. For her, and for Harry and Draco.

"I never told you what I had to go through once I was in the cauldron, but it was very similar to what Draco had done to that Dursley bastard. Draco made Dursley feel all of the pain, physical and emotional, that Harry had to go through while in that house. During the time I was suspended in the cauldron I felt everything every one of my victims felt. Every person's death that I was directly responsible for. There were more victims than I realized.

"Not only that, but my victims came back from the dead and I had to spend forty-eight hours listening to them crying their sorrows… It was maddening and at one point I thought I would be lost to that madness again. But through all that I could still sense Harry and Draco around the cauldron, feeding their lives into their magic, helping me and keeping me together. They kept me alive and sane within that cauldron. I felt their desire for me to retain my body and it wasn't just because it would help out their plans. They really wanted to give me a second chance at life… I-I didn't want to disappoint them. So I held it together. And here I am. And just for your information, Draco's pissed me off, but I wouldn't really kill him… unless he betrayed me. And you better not tell him or Harry about the brothers thing."

"Merlin, Tom. I promise." Hermione wiped away the tears his words inspired. Tom rolled his eyes and pulled out a handkerchief.

"You are far too emotional," he said after handing it to her. "You cry too much."

She gave him a watery smile. "I can't help it."
There was silence for a few minutes before Hermione opened her mouth to tell him how utterly touched she was that he'd confided so much to her, but Tom shook his head and grinned. "I shudder to use the term best friend, but… who do you think I would confide in if not to you?"

This, of course, made her eyes water some more. But then she frowned. "Are you looking into my thoughts?"

"Maybe." He gave her an impish grin before turning and glaring down yet another club patron.

"Well if you are, why haven't you taught me how to do that yet?"

"Because then you'd learn all my secrets. Can't have that. There can be only one Dark master. No Dark Lady is going to upstage me."

Hermione stared blankly at him for a moment; but then she shrugged and pushed another glass his way. "Keep drinking, Mr. Dark Lord. You're going to dance with me."

Tom snorted. "Not in this life time. I will not be dancing with anyone, ever. Period."

Harry appeared soon after bringing with him Dudley and Luna and he immediately scanned the place for any sign of trouble. His eyes widened comically when he spotted Hermione sitting in a dark corner with none other than Tom Riddle. From the glasses on the table, he figured they'd been there for a while. When he spotted what they were drinking his eyes widened some more. How on earth had Hermione convinced Tom to come here?

Harry closed his eyes and nudged Dudley. "Pinch me, will you." Dudley complied and pinched him. Harry opened his eyes and rubbed the sore spot on his arm. Nope, he wasn't dreaming. He could still see the Dark Lord sitting at the back of a club talking animatedly with Hermione. He watched with a growing smile as Tom bent close to her and said something. Hermione's eyes widened and she leaned back in her seat staring unbelievably at the smirking Dark Lord. And then she started to tremble, the trembling turned into full body shakes, until Harry could hear her laughter from all the way across the club.

He blew out a breath. Obviously Hermione had erased any damage Draco might have done if Tom was telling jokes now. Truth be told, when Draco explained to Harry exactly what had been said, Harry had been furious. But Draco had been so remorseful when recounting what had been said that Harry didn't have it in him to hold onto that anger, and instead had demanded that Draco apologize as soon as possible.

Hermione was just calming down from her laughter when Harry, Dudley, and Luna slipped into the booth. Hermione wiped the tears away from her eyes and grinned at Tom.

"Tom told a funny! I didn't know you had such a wicked sense of humor. And when I say wicked I mean evil. Evilly funny… I didn't know that was possible!" she said to the blank faced young man beside her. Tom simply nodded and continued to glare at Dudley who sat as far away from Tom as he could manage. Dudley was understandably not making eye contact with him.

"Mione? How many Avada Kedavra's have you had?" Harry asked.

"Only three. Tom's had four." Harry's mouth dropped open and he stared at Tom, who didn't look drunk at all. In fact he looked as stoic as ever.

"Hello Hermione, Tom," greeted Luna in a singsong voice. Hermione smiled and waved happily, while Tom paused in his reply, one brow arched above his hairline. The impertinence! She knew who he was! How dare she address him in such an informal manner! Well… Tom sat back suddenly,
a little stunned that he actually wasn't as angry as he should be. He stared back at the owlish blinking eyes planted firmly on him.

"Lovegood," he finally greeted, then placed both arms on the table and leaned forward. "The music isn't so loud yet. Why don't you go around humming a tune for everyone?"

"Would my humming make you happy?"

Harry and Hermione watched the exchange with great interest. Harry was slightly concerned but Hermione was too buzzed to really care about Tom's motives.

"Yes," he answered and sent the girl a charming smile. Her cheeks darkened just as Hermione's had done, though Tom didn't notice this in the dim lighting. He only noticed the widening of her odd and pretty gray eyes.

"Okay, Tom!" she chirped and pulled in a deep breath as if preparing to hum. Tom sat forward, eager to watch.

"No! You're not going to get Luna to go around killing innocent people!" Harry finally hissed and jostled Luna's arm to get her to stop.

Tom glared at him for a second and then huffed before sitting back and returning to his drink, trying to ignore everyone and everything around him. Why was he here? Oh yes, because he was weak and cared about what Hermione thought and wanted. Tom felt a very strong urge to pout and just barely managed to keep a straight face.

"Draco's not here yet?" Luna asked.

Upon hearing that blasted blond's name, Tom scowled and downed the rest of his drink. Seeing this, Harry perked up and grinned. Would he actually get to see the infamous Tom Riddle get sloshed tonight? Oh Merlin, he certainly hoped so.

"Oh, look!" Luna exclaimed excitedly without waiting for an answer and jumped from her seat and pointed to the top level. "There are Blibbering Humdinger's up there!" she hurried off without another look at her friends and disappeared through the crowd.

"Err…" Dudley ventured, sure that he shouldn't bring attention to himself, though he couldn't contain his curiosity. "What are Blib- Uh, Blis…Err… what she said?"

Harry shook his head and smiled. "It's better not to ask."

"I'm surprised to see Luna here. I'd thought she'd want to stay with her father," Hermione said.

"I demanded she come with me," Harry told Hermione. "She could use a break and Amortia is off duty from St. Mungo's so she's keeping an eye on Mr. Lovegood tonight. She also thought Luna should go out for some time as well."

"Yes. Though I'm sure Draco will be displeased that's she's here."

"Draco will get over this dislike of Lovegood or else," Tom spat. His tone so frigid that Dudley nearly squeaked in fear. This seemed to please Tom because he grinned maniacally at Harry's cousin.

"I agree," Harry said with a firm nod. "It's stupid."

"Are you going to make up with Draco?" Hermione asked Tom.
"Why should I? He's the one who started it. He's the one who was in such a foul mood and decided to take it out on me."

"He'll apologize," Harry stated just as he felt a tingling at the base of his spine and turned around to see Draco saunter out of the Apparition room. "And look, here he is now."

Tom glared at the offending presence and clutched his glass so tightly that Hermione was afraid it would shatter and cut him. She quickly placed her hand over his and retrieved the glass. Draco spotted them, and it was clear he hadn't expected to see Tom among their group and his steps faltered.

"You. Dursley," Tom growled. Dudley's eyes widened. "Go and watch out for Lovegood. Do not speak to her. Just make sure she doesn't get into trouble."

Dudley immediately leapt up from the table and nodded. "Yes sir!" And then he was gone. Harry was snickering behind his hand. Hermione stood and took said hand.

"Come on, sweetie. Let's go dance. I've been trying for ages to get Tom to go but he won't budge from the table. Meanie!" Hermione stuck her tongue out at him, and Tom retaliated by sticking up his middle finger.

"O- Okay, Mione… Just don't, err you know…" Harry began.

"I know, Harry. I won't scare you." They left just as Draco came to the table. He glared murder at the retreating forms of his lover and friend, and then turned to look at Tom who stared back without blinking.

Draco sighed and sat down across from him. "Do you still want to kill me?"

"The urge is only slight."

"I'm sorry. I apologize, Tom. I was very much out of line."

Tom nodded and the tension released from his shoulders. He was amazed that that was all it took for him to forgive Draco. The fact that Draco was sincere with his apology meant a great deal as well.

Draco frowned. "Well?"

"What?"

"Aren't you going to apologize too?"

"For what? I don't believe I said anything that should warrant an apology."

"You're kidding! You called me baby Malfoy!"

Tom smirked. "Oh, did I bruise baby Malfoy's ego?" This was more like it. Riling a Malfoy was always fun.

"Stop calling me that!"

"If you treat Lovegood with a little more respect." Tom picked up his drink and stared at the alcohol inside, biting back the urge to laugh at the incredulous look spread across Draco's face.

"B-but why?" he sputtered.
"Anyone who can kill someone the way she does deserves respect. Even if she did do it by accident," Tom replied offhandedly.

Draco sighed and nodded. And then his silver eyes gleamed with amusement. "You utter pervert! I knew that made you hot!"

"I can't believe he's still here," Harry laughed against his lover's pale neck. They were pressed tightly together and swayed along with the slow sensual beat of the music. It was well past midnight, the club was packed with happy merry makers, and Tom was still sitting at the same table. Only now he was sitting with the Weasley twins, a twin on each side of him, as well as Blaise and Ginny. There was a bottle of Firewhiskey sitting dead center of the table; its contents decreasing quickly from the rounds of shots the five of them were consuming.

Draco grinned against Harry's temple. "He's so drunk he probably can't even move."

"But he's good enough to keep pouring himself shots."

Harry was happy to see that Tom looked relaxed and he even saw him laugh at some point at something one of the twins said which pleased the twin as Tom's face took on a whole other plane of beauty when he laughed with sincere pleasure that held no malice behind it. Draco looked over and snorted when he spotted Hermione as she bounced back to the table, and slithered over one of the twin's laps to squeeze in next to Tom. She turned and plastered a drunken kiss upon Tom's cheek. He immediately threw a friendly arm around her back, squeezing her firmly to his side. Fred, George, Ginny, and Blaise looked at two of them in shock.

"People are going to start getting the wrong idea about the two of them," Draco said and then groaned when Harry's fingers skipped their way down his chest and passed his waistband until they were lightly resting against the bulge under his pants. He groaned again and buried his head against Harry's neck when those fingers flexed and firmly grasped him.

"Tom and Hermione would only care what Severus thinks, and Severus knows they are only friends," Harry whispered into Draco's ear, before biting the lobe between his teeth. "Hermione has always been a touchy feely person, always throwing hugs around and Uncle Sev knows this as well." Again he flexed his fingers over Draco and gasped when the blond bit his neck in retaliation, though no blood was drawn.

"Quit talking, Potter."

"Make me poncy bastard." He grinned when he felt the twitch of Draco's erection under his palm.

"Get a bloody room!" someone snapped as they cut through the dance floor and pushed passed the lovers. "Potter's such a disgusting freak!"

Harry was so surprised and upset by this that he backed away from Draco and was about to retort when complete strangers began to stand up for him. The first of which was a couple that had been dancing beside Harry and Draco. "Don't call Harry Potter a freak! You're just jealous!" the witch snapped. Her boyfriend nodded, "yeah, after all… Potter and Malfoy don't wank off by themselves day and night to mental pictures of their mothers. Shove off!"

Harry stared wide-eyed at the couple beside him and then spun around when he heard others. "You're fucking it up for the rest of us! Be gone!" This coming from another male couple and those two pushed the wizard who'd spoken against Harry off the dance floor.

"We were watching Malfoy and Potter get off! It was a free show! What's your problem?" This came
from a co-ed couple nearby whom Harry never met before. He'd never met any of these people before and he couldn't help but be touched by their standing up for him and Draco. By now the entire dance floor had stilled and was calling out insults to the man who dared insult him and he watched, strangely detached, as the wizard and his friends were bullied out of the club.

The shock he felt from being defended by complete strangers managed to keep his anger away. He was a little overwhelmed by the support he was receiving as he didn't think it had anything to do with his scar for once. It was confirmed when a witch appeared beside him, patted his arm and said, "it's okay, honey. You go on and do whatever you want with your man. Only a complete idiot would say such mean things!" She hadn't even looked at his scar.

Harry turned to look at Draco, only to find the blond gone. Uh oh.

Draco!

I'll be back, Draco replied in a deadly calm that had Harry shivering. Go have some drinks with Tom.

Draco, you just left me in the middle of the dance floor! Harry whirled around trying to look for his lover, but it seemed Draco had disappeared.

I won't be long.

Harry pouted and moved off the dance floor and sat down at their designated table. Everyone looked at him with concerned expressions. "Harry, what was all that about?" Hermione asked.

"Some homophobe said something mean and then Draco deserted me to exact revenge. But it was really wicked because perfect strangers stood up for me!"

"What exactly was said?" Tom asked.

"I'm not an idiot. I'm not about to tell you so you'll go run after the guy as well." Tom looked like he was going to demand it, but Ginny reached over and tapped Harry's shoulder.

"Hey look, Sirius is here."

Harry groaned and let his head fall on the table. Just what he did not need. Sirius was bound to make more of a commotion than Draco did when he left Harry standing alone on the dance floor. The rest of the group turned and watched Sirius snatch a bottle of Firewhiskey that Dirk was holding out to him and he bounded over to them. Without a word, Sirius began to top off everyone's shot glass. He only noticed the tense atmosphere when he raised the shot glass to his lips.

Slowly he returned the glass to the table. "What's going on here? What's with the long faces?"

Harry looked at his friends and bared his fangs in a silent warning. He then stood and went in search of Luna and Dudley. He was sure Tom had ordered Dudley to watch after Luna just to make sure the bloke didn't have any fun, especially since Luna didn't seem to want to do anything that one usually did in a club. Throughout the night he caught sight of Dudley often just standing back and watching the people around him, a small smile on his face. Harry was very curious to know what was going through his cousin's mind.

He found Luna upstairs leaning against the rail and watching all the people dance below with an absentminded smile. Looking around, he noticed Dudley was not up there with them. He asked her if she'd seen him.

"I told him to go have fun. Look, there he is," Luna pointed down into the dancing crowd. Harry was surprised to see Dudley dancing as if he hadn't a care in the world.
"He was supposed to look after you," Harry said as an afterthought. Not that he actually cared knowing Tom was just being vindictive.

Luna laughed. "I don't need looking after. Everything happens as it should, you know."

"But Tom told him to watch you."

"Why should he demand such a thing?" Luna turned and wrapped her arm around his.

"No one can say for certain what goes on in his mind."

"Hmm…" Luna moved off, seemingly forgetting she had Harry's arm in an alarmingly strong grip and dragged him with her. They both plopped down in chairs side by side and for a moment were lost in a comfortable silence. Unlike the last time he'd been there, the top floor wasn't closed off and more people were gathered upstairs. They sent curious glances his and Luna's way, but otherwise left them alone.

Harry and Luna spent some time talking about the upcoming school year, the Crumple-Horned Snorkack, Hermione's rising skills in the Dark Arts, Luna's abrupt knowledge of some Dark spells, the Crumple-Horned Snorkack, and The Quibbler. Harry was surprised to find out most of The Quibbler this summer was edited by Luna herself since her father had fallen ill at the beginning of summer.

Finally, Luna smiled brightly at nothing in particular. "And revenge has been taken." And then she looked at him, "would you mind terribly taking me back to Daddy now? I can't be away from him for long."

Of course Harry didn't mind and he Apparated her back to Malfoy Manor from that very spot, scaring quite a few patrons in doing so. When he returned to the club, there was still no sign of Draco. He refused to ask the blond where he was and would wait for Draco to seek him out. Harry grabbed Dudley from the dance floor and dragged him back to their table. He was greeted with yet another surprising sight. Not only was Sirius still there but also Lucius was now in attendance, and everyone at the table had shot glasses and were playing I Never. Everyone!

"Harry, Dudders, just in time! Grab a seat and a glass," George yelled at them.

"Some of you must be Polyjuiced!" Harry laughed and looked pointedly at Tom and Lucius as he and Dudley squeezed in to join.

"I assure you I am not playing this ridiculous game of my own free will!" Lucius snapped and glared at Tom.

"If I have to play, then so do you, old friend." There was a wicked gleam in his eyes and Harry laughed upon hearing the Dark Lord slurring his words.

"Why are you here, anyway?" Harry asked Lucius and nodded his thanks when Ginny passed him a full shot glass. Lucius favored all the occupants with a disdainful sneer; the biggest sneer aimed at his grinning husband, but otherwise remained quiet.

"My turn!" Sirius laughed. "I never followed my husband to a club because I'm insanely jealous of the young sexy bartender."

Blaise snorted and then quickly covered his mouth with his hand and Ginny hid her laughing face against his chest and peeked out at the furious blond who regally brought the shot glass up to his lips to drink. The game was enchanted after all. Lucius had to drink. Fred, George, and Harry laughed
outright, while Tom and Hermione chuckled quietly together. Dudley witnessed the rage passing through the eyes of the gorgeous man who looked like an older version of Malfoy, and so he remained quiet.

"There will be retribution for this," Lucius hissed quietly to Sirius who was shaking with laughter.

"I'm not the one making you play," he replied and then motioned for Blaise to take his turn.

Blaise grinned. "I never made it a goal in life to cause total chaos within the world." Harry snorted when Tom, Lucius, George, and Fred took a shot.

"What? We just…"

"Use the joke shop…"

"As a cover," the twins answered when Tom and Lucius turned to them.

"We were born for mayhem, mate," Fred said to Tom. "Your turn, Gin."

The red head flashed a grin. "I never ran across Hogwarts grounds in the nude." She drank along with Blaise, Lucius, Sirius, and…

"Hermione!"

"It was just a dare! Lavender Brown thinks she's so clever. Thought she'd make me seem like a prude to everyone… I showed her!"

"Yeah, and everyone else!" Harry laughed. Then everyone turned to Lucius. Sirius drinking surprised no one as he did crazy stuff all the time, but Lucius…

"I refuse to answer any question except for the I Never question. Let's get on with it," Lucius replied flatly.

As the game progressed, Harry realized Dudley wasn't able to drink at all as most statements had to do with either Hogwarts or doing things in the Wizarding World, which probably made his cousin feel uncomfortable and left out so Harry told him he could go back to dancing if he wanted. But Dudley declined saying he was having fun at the table learning about Harry's friends. Harry couldn't help but be pleased by this.

"Tom's turn."

Again, Tom smiled wickedly at Lucius. "I never lusted after Severus Snape."

Everyone, of course, knew Hermione would drink, but they weren't expecting to hear a growl coming from Lucius as he lifted the shot glass to his lips. He refused to meet the horrified look on his husband's face. Fred and George also drank, but no one cared as they were watching for what Sirius would do.

"You lust after Snivellus!" Sirius stood, his body trembling with disgust and fury. "You want that disgusting snarky git?"

"Sirius, watch what you say!" Hermione said, but the Animagus wasn't listening.

Lucius remained seated and continued to glare at Tom. "That was a very long time ago."

"Still! When? Was it when we were dating? Is that why you spent so much time with Snape?"
Tom sat back, enjoying the show and the very pleasant light feeling his body had taken on. His brain felt like it was swimming around inside his head.

"You've started a fight, Tom. How could you?"

"It's just a game," he replied to Hermione. "And Lucius is telling the truth. It was a very long time ago." Still, he continued to smile. Who knew games of this sort could be fun? And Lucius had so many dirty little secrets...

"Not the point!" Sirius barked.

"All right. Enough fighting," Harry said softly, but there was a definite edge to his voice that indicated he should be obeyed at once. Sirius glared before stalking away in an obvious cloud of fury.

"Thanks so very much!" Lucius spat, then he stood and hurried after Sirius, nearly running Draco over in the process as the younger Malfoy returned. Draco stared after his father with an owlish expression before blinking and shaking his head. He reached the table just as Harry made the next statement with a nasty sneer on his face.

"I never had a snake fetish. Of the sexual kind."

Draco was halfway down into his seat when he froze along with everyone else. Hermione and Draco stared at Harry in horror, while everyone else stared at Tom, whose eyes seemed to glow red for just a moment. His fingers clutched at the glass as if trying to keep it on the table, but as seconds passed the shot glass slowly made its way to Tom's lips until he drank the blasted shot.

"All's fair, Tom," Harry quipped with a malicious smile.

"I'll get you for that."

_Gonna use your snake skinned whip on me?_ Harry batted his eyelashes at the fuming Dark Lord and grinned when Draco groaned and tugged him over until he was planted firmly on his blond lover's lap. Harry dropped his head back onto a broad shoulder and closed his eyes upon feeling Draco's erection throbbing beneath him. Harry couldn't help but wiggle a little to let Draco know he wanted it. And badly.

"I think it's time for more dancing," Blaise said when he saw Draco's hands disappear under Harry's shirt. His friend had a very disturbing dark glint in his eyes, and Blaise wondered what Draco had done to the guys who badmouthed Harry. He had a feeling that guy and his friends were dead, but he didn't want to think about that too much. Blaise quickly led a sniggering Ginny away.

"I think it's time for more dancing," Blaise said when he saw Draco's hands disappear under Harry's shirt. His friend had a very disturbing dark glint in his eyes, and Blaise wondered what Draco had done to the guys who badmouthed Harry. He had a feeling that guy and his friends were dead, but he didn't want to think about that too much. Blaise quickly led a sniggering Ginny away.

"Just for clarification, I only had that fetish when I was completely insane! Now I'm going home," Tom stated. "You will allow me to escort you to Severus so that he may take you home. You've had too much to drink to go alone," he said to Hermione. She nodded and let him help her up. They both slightly stumbled trying to get around the table. He shot one last pissed off look at Harry before departing with Hermione. Fred and George looked slightly put out that everyone was leaving.

"Pop off!" Draco snapped at them, his eyes glued firmly to Harry's neck. "And take Dursley with you."

"How do you like that?" Fred said.

"We've been dismissed," George intoned. "Come on, Dud's. The bar calls."
When the young *Ukatae* had the table in the dark corner all to themselves, Harry twisted around until he was straddling Draco and pouted at his lover. "You left me alone in the middle of the dance floor."

"I needed to take care of business," Draco responded, before brushing his lips over Harry's jaw. Harry shifted and roughly grinded their erections together.

"The only thing you need to take care of is me," he hissed.

Draco smirked and allowed his hands to travel to Harry's back where he could massage away his mate's tense muscles. He ran a finger down Harry's spine, thinking it was only the wing sacks rubbing against his knuckle as he went down, and grinned when Harry purred and pushed harder against him. He spread his hands over Harry's back and that's when he noticed. Draco's questing fingers froze and Harry's glazed eyes opened and peered at his mate in question.

"Your wings. The wing sacks are gone. I can feel your wings," he whispered in awe as he ran his fingertips over the soft feathers and watched transfixed as Harry arched his back in obvious pleasure.

"I didn't notice they were free." Harry started to purr loudly as Draco continued to stroke the silken feathers. The wings were apparently very, very sensitive pleasure areas.

"Obviously." Draco removed his hands and began to unbutton Harry's shirt. He wanted to see those wings. He didn't care they were in the middle of a club. He had to see his mate's wings.

Their *Ukatae* guard stood off in the shadows watching, prepared to defend the young ones if necessary. Ozemir watched with amusement as Draco began to undo Harry's shirt and wondered how far they would actually go here in the public's eye. He was willing to bet they didn't care where they were.

"Those markings!" Ozemir stumbled backwards and fell to his knees, staring in shock and in what might have been horror at the metallic green markings covering the small fine black feathers of Harry's wings.

"Ozemir, calm yourself. We can't be sure," Falde whispered softly.

But Ozemir was shaking his head. "You knew! You knew this whole time, Falde! And I've seen those markings before! There is no mistaking."

"What are you talking about?" Brumek barked. "Everyone with wings have markings. I see nothing strange beyond the size."

"Of course you don't see! Why would you?" Ozemir snarled at Brumek. "You know nothing but fighting!" he snapped and stared at his hands, which were shaking. When he spoke next his voice was soft, trembling. "Y-you weren't there. Hirsha, forgive me."
Ozemir picked himself off the floor and took another step back. Brumek would have retaliated if it weren't for the fear shining in those violet eyes. He'd seen plenty of different emotions cross Ozemir's face, but he'd never seen fear. A horrible, encompassing fear. He wondered if it was fear for himself or for the young ones. And why? Why were those markings affecting Ozemir in this way?

Brumek turned to Falde for some sort of explanation because it was clear their leader knew what Ozemir was babbling on about, but he and Talyn were transfixed on watching as Draco made Harry stand and turn so that he could thoroughly inspect his mate's wings. Upon Draco's command, Harry concentrated, and then smiled when his wings rose off his back and stretched out. The width was double the length of Harry's arms, which was twice as long as the normal wing spread of *Ukatae*.

Brumek turned back to Ozemir to find the slighter *Ukatae* staring at the ground, fists clenched tightly by his sides. His eyes were glazed over, and emotions played across his face as if he were remembering something painful. "Ozemir?" he asked softly. He wasn't used to seeing the white haired creature with those kinds of looks on his face. He didn't like to see it. It made him feel strange. "Snap out of it!" he hissed and grabbed Ozemir's arm to shake him. Ozemir flinched away from his touch and continued to back up, completely submerged within his troubled thoughts.

Brumek was never so happy to see humans as he was then when he spotted one of Harry's friends rush into the club with an anxious look on his face as he looked around for his friends. He needed a distraction from Ozemir because it was obvious he could not do anything to ease Ozemir. So he left his comrades to go and see what the problem could be. Anything was better than having to stand there and watch Ozemir lose himself to whatever was taking over his thoughts.

Brumek constructed a glamour to look human and appeared in front of the brown haired human. Neville was so surprised to see him appear that he stumbled right into the *Ukatae*. "Human," Brumek greeted. "Aren't you supposed to be on a mission?"

"Y-yes! That's why I'm here. I need to see Harry and Draco. Maybe they can make something of it." Brumek, feeling very generous at the moment, was about to lead the little human to the young ones, but they were interrupted.

"Neville!" Fred and George popped up on either side of the slightly panting youth. "What's going on, mate?"

"Here, have a drink!" The twins each thrust a glass of something into Neville's hands and he nearly dropped them because the twins both leaned up against him in their drunken state. Neville heard someone laughing behind. When he turned, he saw a boy with curly dirty blond hair laughing. His cheeks were pink from the over abundance of liquor the twins had been giving him. Neville did a double take when he realized it was Harry's cousin. The boy had lost a serious amount of weight since the last time he'd seen him.

"Guys, you're about to knock him over." Dudley moved forward and pulled the twins off him.

"Err… thanks, Dudley. Um… what are you doing here anyway?" Neville had not been informed about Dudley being a wizard. He had guessed as much but no one had confirmed it and he really hadn't expected to ever see the boy again.

"Meeting new people. Harry wanted me to have a look at the Wizarding World before I made my decision on whether or not I wanted to become part of it."

"Yeah? What do you think so far?" Dudley grinned and pulled out his wand for Neville to see. "Very nice. So, this means you're going to be staying, then?"
"Yep. Mr. Black is going to be my tutor."

Neville would have continued on with the conversation but Brumek, who'd lost his patience, interrupted. "Your mission!" he snapped.

Neville stepped back from Brumek in alarm, but then quickly covered his surprise. "Yeah... thanks. Sorry, Dudley. Have to go report to Harry and Draco."

Dudley nodded and watched Neville being led away by that arse Brumek before he returned to his seat between the twins, who'd returned to sit at the bar, drunkenly snickering while watching Neville and Dudley talk.

Harry was just learning how delightful it was to have wings. Especially when it pertained to Draco. Apparently, the wings were for both mates and had multiple purposes. One purpose was discovered right away. The wings released a pheromone that simply drove his mate mad with lust and Harry giggled watching Draco try and control himself. He was just starting to get into the game where he'd flap his wings in and out as Draco stood completely still staring at the beautiful, entrancing sight. Harry allowed the tips of his wings to lightly brush over the blond's face, eliciting a full body shudder from his mate every time.

Draco had just about enough and was preparing to pounce when Brumek chose that time to pull Neville in past the black shadow barrier. Neville's eyes widened upon the sight Brumek brought him in to. He just barely contained his own laughter when Harry let out another giggle as he stared over his shoulder at Draco's drooling mouth. Neville's amusement died though when he caught sight of the green markings on his friend's wings.

Brumek rolled his eyes at the young ones' antics. "Your friend is back from his mission. He has something to report."

Draco turned very slowly, fixing smoldering silver eyes on Brumek and growled something awful. The blond's glamour dropped like a bomb and he transformed completely into Ukatae, and if Dark elves could breathe fire, Draco would have been doing so. It was then Brumek remembered. He cursed long and hard to himself as he backed away slowly, shielding the young ones' human friend behind him as he did so. If a Ukatae was displaying his wings for his mate's pleasure, it was a very bad idea to interrupt. One was never allowed to go near a bonded submissive under these circumstances unless you were the dominating mate. Draco now had the right, under Ukatae law, to challenge Brumek to duel, or even to just outright kill him.

Draco had just lunged at Brumek when Falde yanked the warrior and Neville back out of the barrier and sealed it tight in order to keep Draco in. "You know better! Do you know what you've done? Never mind!" Falde shouted when Brumek would have answered. The shout drew half the club's attention of course, though no one could see who had shouted. "Take Ozemir back to the Manor and stay there. Maybe we can calm the young one down. You'll be lucky if he's only going off the natural protective instinct and not the Knowledge. Go now!"

Brumek growled in frustration as he lunged for Ozemir. Damned young one! It wasn't his fault the young ones decided a public place was just as good as a private place for such a display. Ozemir was still in a world of his own and didn't notice when Brumek gripped him around the waist and Shadowed them away.

Neville stood just outside the barrier and stared at it in horror. He could hear the snarls coming from inside, the vicious yells, and Draco's lethal claws scratching at the barrier. "Go back to your friends at the bar," Falde instructed. His disembodied voice nearly had Neville jumping out of his skin.
"B-but they need… I need to let them know what I've found."

"Not now," Falde growled.

Neville stammered before rushing off to the bar. He immediately grabbed Fred’s drink and gulped it down before explaining to the twins and Dudley what had just happened.

Meanwhile inside the black shadow barrier, Harry took a minute to watch his furious mate doing everything possible to get through to Brumek. Usually, when Draco was being protective and vindictive on his mate’s behalf, Harry stood back and allowed it, but since he knew Brumek had meant no disrespect, and because he didn’t want to lose Brumek as one of his guard, Harry decided Draco’s attentions should quickly be put back on him.

He turned his back on Draco and rapidly flapped his wings. So fast that a strong breeze built up around them inside the barrier. The pheromones released were just too strong for Draco to ignore even when he was in an uncontrollable state. Harry grinned when the pounding and snarling stopped, and he began to purr and prepare himself for the shag of a lifetime. All that anger Draco had in him had to be released somewhere, and Harry was happy enough to be the one to help with that.

He slowly turned, his wings still pumping and watched Draco under heavy eyelids. As his hands traveled down his chest to his slacks, Harry moved forward slowly, eyes never leaving his mate’s. Draco stood stock still, staring at his mate as if in a trance, which was just fine for Harry, as he wanted to play with his mate first. As he unbuttoned his slacks and dragged them down to just past his hipbones, he spoke softly in a voice dripping with want. "Draco, I thought I told you the only thing you need to take care of is me. You’re not being very responsible."

Draco numbly shook his head and inhaled deeply as Harry inched closer.

Harry slid up against him and drew the blond’s shirt up over his head then tossed it aside. He started to kiss Draco in all the places he knew would drive his mate crazy. Under his ears, along his neck to the pulse points, over his jaw… he avoided Draco’s mouth, knowing exactly how much his mate yearned for his lips. Harry created a lava trail of kisses over Draco’s chest, tonguing the hard pink nipples until Draco was growling at him from the intense pleasure that brought him, and then Harry moved on. Down to the sensitive naval, dragging his nails down along with his lips. He dipped his tongue in Draco’s naval, his tongue a cyclone of pleasure and relished in the heat and trembles his mate was releasing. Draco’s hands fisted in Harry’s hair, gripping tightly but not impeding Harry’s southern journey.

Harry knelt and pushed Draco back against the barrier before releasing his leaking erection and gazed at the pink head covered in pre-cum. Harry licked his lips and stared up into Draco’s face. Without ever breaking eye contact, Harry leaned forward and took the leaking head into his mouth and sucked gently, grinning around Draco’s mouth, knowing exactly how much his mate yearned for his lips. Harry created a lava trail of kisses over Draco’s chest, tonguing the hard pink nipples until Draco was growling at him from the intense pleasure that brought him, and then Harry moved on. Down to the sensitive naval, dragging his nails down along with his lips. He dipped his tongue in Draco’s naval, his tongue a cyclone of pleasure and relished in the heat and trembles his mate was releasing. Draco’s hands fisted in Harry’s hair, gripping tightly but not impeding Harry’s southern journey.

"Gods," he groaned.

Harry pulled back slowly, running his tongued along the underside of Draco’s cock and twisting it around the head as it left his mouth. He moved forward quickly, sucking hard this time. He spent a large amount of time teasing and sucking Draco’s head. Draco squeezed his eyes closed and banged his head against the barrier as uncontrollable groans and whimpers escaped his mouth. When Harry
knew Draco wouldn't last for very much longer, Harry reached forward and fingered Draco's balls and hollowed his cheeks again. *C'mon, lover. You know you want to fuck my mouth. Do what you like.* Draco's eyes snapped open, burning Harry with that hot look. Harry just closed his eyes, relaxed his throat, and leaned forward prepared for the fucking his mouth was about to receive.

"Open your eyes, Harry. You watch me when I do this." Draco hissed and groaned in pleasure when he had emeralds burning brightly with lust looking up at him. Draco retracted his claws to comb his fingers through Harry's hair before gripping the brunet around the base of his head. He thrust forward while pulling Harry's head towards his cock and thrust wildly in and out of his mate's mouth, their eyes locked on each other. Harry gripped Draco's arse tightly as his mate forced his head back and forth around his hard cock. Draco bent his knees a bit and increased the speed of his thrusts, and squeezed his eyes shut when he knew he was about to explode. "Fuck. Harry…"

Harry loved the expressions flitting over Draco's face as he reached his peak. The raw passion, exquisite pleasure, and unbelieving waves of hot lust he saw was enough to bring him along, and when he knew Draco would last only seconds longer, Harry stilled his head, keeping Draco's cock deep within his mouth, and growled. The vibrations sent Draco reeling and he shouted Harry's name as he came, spurtng all his seed down Harry's throat.

Harry pulled back, licking his lips, and watched Draco sink to his knees, panting heavily. Harry smirked at a job well done and leaned back against the table, and allowed his wings to flutter softly while he watched Draco regain his breath and strength. They were by no means finished.

Draco finally stood and quickly made his way to Harry, pinning him against the table. "Where the bloody hell did you learn to do that?"

Harry smirked. "I've been practicing."

Draco leaned forward until their noses were touching. "On who?" he hissed.

Harry laughed sweetly and swept his fingers through the soft hair of his beloved. "I've been using lollies. Did you like?"

Draco hummed from the back of his throat and leaned forward to lick the cum from Harry's chin that he wasn't able to swallow and then moved to his mouth. Harry eagerly returned Draco's kisses, wrapping his legs and arms around Draco. When Harry concentrated between kisses he was able to wrap his wings around himself and Draco and was delighted to hear Draco growl as his cock began to harden again.

"Oh good. I thought I would have to wait." Harry smiled what he thought was an innocent smile, but Draco caught the gleam in his eyes.

He grinned at his lusty mate. "Don't insult me, Potter."

"But it's so easy to do." Harry grinned. "Tell me, what did you do to that wizard from earlier?"

Draco's eyes flashed, his cock twitched at the memory. He leaned down and sucked on Harry's bottom lip. *I slaughtered him and his bastard friends.* Harry tilted his head back and laughed excitably. Draco leaned forward to kiss his neck and lifted Harry's hips so he could pull Harry's pants down around his ankles. He prepared to return the very pleasing favor to Harry, but before he could kneel, Harry grabbed his arms in an almost painful grip and kept him upright.

"Don't want to wait. Want you inside. Now." In the span of a few seconds, he and Harry found
themselves completely nude. Harry smirked when Draco's surprise shown on his face. "I told you I don't want to wait."

It was a very good thing a shield was around that table because both young *Ukatae* used every inch of that round space. Draco took Harry right on that table and managed to bring Harry to orgasm rather quickly there. Then Draco pushed them to a standing position against the barrier, where Harry begged Draco to describe in detail what he'd done to that fucking big-mouthed wizard. Instead of describing it, Draco transmitted pictures into Harry's mind while fucking Harry from behind to near blindness. The darkness Harry witnessed in his powerful mate urged Harry on to experience an all new level of passion and pleasure. They finally ended up in a chair with Harry riding Draco, their tongues dancing as erotically as their hips. Sweat poured off them as the barrier area was filled with the passionate cries of their lovemaking.

Anyone who was standing near the barrier could hear everything as no one thought to cast a silencing spell around it. Luckily, there was a barrier and it made the table invisible therefore no one went near that area, except for Fred and George. But they were quickly pushed away by a blushing Talyn. She and Falde stood outside the barrier with their backs to it. Falde remained stoned faced, his thoughts completely on those marks and he hardly heard what was going on behind him. But Talyn was having a harder time not listening. It was very hard to ignore and she once looked over her shoulder… well, it was twice. Talyn had always been a very curious creature and she knew it was rude to look, but the sounds Harry and Draco were making…. And were the young ones actually old enough to even be able to do that?

Fred, George, Neville, and Dudley were still at the bar when closing time came around and the last club goers were shooed home by Dirk and his bouncers. He allowed the four at the bar to stay because they were Draco Malfoy's friends, and since the Malfoys were his financial backing, he didn't make the friends leave. Besides, he knew Draco was still around with Harry, even though he couldn't see them and he knew their friends were waiting for them. However, he did refuse them more alcohol.

"How long does it take to bloody shag?" Dudley finally asked after picking his head up from the bar. "It's like we've been waiting for hours!" Neville nodded his head in agreement.

Fred looked over at them and frowned. "You've never shagged before, have you?"

Dudley's face went as red as a tomato. He looked sideways at Neville who sat beside him and was relieved to see he wasn't the only one embarrassed.

"Besides, this is Harry and Draco. They've got so much pent up sexual tension from the many years of fighting that they'll be at it like bunnies for years before they settle down. If at all."

"Yeah, about that… I thought they were enemies. When I first met Malfoy he said they hated each other. How could they go from being enemies to this lovey dovey sappy couple?" Dudley asked.

"Well that's simple. They're soul mates," Fred answered. "They never realized all that hate was actually something else. And I suspect their animosity towards each other was their way of fighting it or acknowledging it in an oblivious way. You know how little boys like to be mean to girls they fancy. It was sort of like that. Completely oblivious, those two, and Draco was a right git at the time and Harry was only too happy to fight back."

George was nodding along with his brother's explanation. "Also, as they matured, I believe they finally realized that the hate was something else and it scared them. They became more violent towards each other before they stopped fighting all together. Harry was the first, I think, to accept what he felt for Draco. He refused to fight with Draco after that." George frowned. "That's when
Harry started to get depressed. He refused to fight, and since they weren't fighting, there was no reason for him to be near Draco. It must have hurt him not to be able to interact with the blond git, but he stood firm.

"Harry was the first to accept his feelings, but Draco was the first to realize he was in love with Harry. I think he realized that years before Harry. They're both so stubborn that it took the Soul Mate bond to bring them together," Fred went on smiling when he noticed Neville and Dudley were hanging on every word.

"If you've quite finished talking about us," Draco drawled from behind them. All four bodies twisted around to find the two young Ukatae standing there. Harry was grinning, but Draco was scowling.

"Err… how long exactly have you been standing there?" Neville ventured. He paled when Draco bared his teeth. Draco was certainly not happy with his life being discussed like this, but Harry didn't seem to mind. In fact he was actually amused.

"We were here since, 'how could they go from being enemies to this lovey dovey sappy couple?'" Harry responded and watched as Dudley turned back around and let his head drop heavily down onto the bar. "I hadn't realized you two were so observant," he told the twins. "You could have clued me in."

"Naw, everything happened as it was supposed to."

"That or you only just figured that stuff out after we got together," Draco replied with an eye roll. Harry turned his laughing eyes on Neville. "You wanted to talk to us, I presume."

"Erm…yeah."

"Right. We'll go back to the Manor first. Dudley, Fred, George… You guys are welcome to come with us. You can stay the night. If not, I'll take you home Dudley."

"No. We'll go straight home," Draco said firmly, knowing how tired his mate was. They'd been separated most of the day too, so he didn't want Harry out of sight again that night. "Dursley will have to come with us."

"I don't have a problem with that, Harry. I told Mum there was a chance I wouldn't return tonight."

"We'll tag along too. We're curious to know what Neville found out." George grinned at Draco. "Unless His Highness has a problem with us being there."

"It won't be a problem. We'll all go in the circle. After the amount of alcohol you two have digested, you do not need to be Apparating anywhere."

"Mighty kind of you, Draco," said Fred

"Must have been one hell of a shag," George added and the twins grinned wickedly.

Draco stepped forward in a threatening manner. "If you keep talking like that I'm going to-"

"It was monumental."

"Harry!"

"Well it was, lover. I'm not going to lie." In fact, Harry's cheeks were still blushing as he replayed all he and Draco had just done… In a club no less and it had been so thrilling! Draco smirked and
buffed his fingernails on his shirt.

"Yeah, okay. Let's go," George said as he helped his brother stand. "You're making the blushing virgins uncomfortable." They turned and pinned Dudley and Neville with a smirking stare. Neville cleared his throat and inched his way to hide behind Dudley who was slightly taller than him. Dudley noticed the movement and suddenly became angry.

"It's not cool to make fun of someone for something like that," Dudley said, his eyes narrowing. Harry was once again surprised. Dudley's personality had completely changed from being the bully to being the defender.

"Don't get an attitude, Dursley. You are the last person on earth who has the right to say what is considered right and wrong," Draco growled and stepped forward, but Harry stopped him by holding out his arm, and he peered at Dudley oddly for a moment. His bright green eyes moved from Dudley, to Neville, then back again.

"No, he's right. It's not cool. Sorry."

Draco turned outraged eyes onto his mate. "I can't believe you're apologizing to him, Harry!"

"Stop it," Harry chided. He pulled away to create the circle, leaving Draco alternately pouting at Harry and glaring at Dudley.

"Thanks Dirk!" Harry called out. Dirk came from the back and saluted him.

"C'ya guys next time." Dirk watched, fascinated, as Harry, Draco and their friends disappeared in a circle of mist.

Brumek brought them back to the forest by Malfoy Manor and stepped back away from Ozemir who had taken a deep breath upon coming out of the Shadow. Ozemir was staring at the ground with a cute little frown on his face, but he was no longer shaking and his eyes seemed clear enough.

"Ozemir?"

The *Ukatae* looked up and the frown vanished from his face in an instant to be replaced by a goofy smile. "*How silly of me!*" he laughed softly, setting Brumek on edge again. "*Excuse me for my behavior, Brumek. It will not happen again.*"

"*Forget that! I want to know what happened to you. What was going on inside of that bloody big brain of yours?*"

"*It was nothing, I promise.*" Ozemir winked at Brumek before making his way passed the warrior. "*I'll be in the library.*"

Brumek grabbed Ozemir as he passed and leaned over until they were eye to eye. "*I have come to admit that you would not be useless in battle. Please don't insult me by insinuating that I am stupid. It was not nothing.*"

"*And why do you care that I lost myself in a moment of weakness? Do you want to know if it happens often? If it will ruin the way we work as a group? Is that the problem?*"

"*You're awfully touchy, Ozemir. Is it so wrong of me to wonder what's wrong with my comrade?*"

Ozemir spoke softly, almost too low for Brumek to catch it. "*You've never wondered before.*"
"I wonder now." Brumek prepared to mention Harry's wings and the marks, but at the last moment thought better of it. He knew it would close Ozemir away from him and it would probably upset the Scholar again, and for some reason he didn't want that to happen. He cleared his throat and looked away. "I suppose we should return." He began walking without seeing if Ozemir would follow.

Ozemir did follow and smirked as he caught up and matched his stride, glad that Brumek decided not to press further. "Let us hope the young one decides he likes you alive and well. It is inconceivable how you could have forgotten the rules of the mate's display. How could you forget you needed to remain at least-"

"Thirty feet away... yes I know. I wasn't thinking clearly at the time."

"Dare I hope you were simply worried about me?"

"It was nothing of the sort!" Brumek snapped. "Besides, what were they thinking, doing such a thing there? Don't they have any modesty at all?"

"No. I don't think they do. They have both been in the public's eye for so long. Harry didn't like being the center of attention, while Draco has always adored it. Now that Harry is a Ukatae, he will do as he pleases and does not care where he is or whom he's around. No one would dare question him or his mate. Not to mention that now he has the security of his mate, whom he knows without a shadow of a doubt will protect him from anything. He revels in Draco's presence after such a hard cold life."

"How do you know so much about the young ones? You know quite a lot about who they were before they came to be Ukatae. How is that?"

Ozemir snorted. "I'm a Scholar and I'm very observant. That is my job. To attain knowledge... Honestly, Brumek. You were just complaining that you were not stupid."

"You are making me rethink my decision to not kill you. Perhaps you should be silent now." When Ozemir smiled blindingly at him, Brumek growled, "stop doing that you fool!"

Ozemir laughed. "You sounded like the human Severus Snape just now!" He was already to the manor by the time Brumek had unsheathed his sword.

Harry brought everyone back into the manor's library once they left the club. He ordered a house elf to bring everyone sober up potions to be taken before Neville got on with it.

"I'll have one as well," Tom said as he rose from a high backed chair placed in front of the large fireplace. Everyone was surprised to see him.

"I thought you'd be asleep by now, Tom. Glad you're here, though. Longbottom is about to tell us what happened on his mission," he said gesturing to Fred and George. "Remind me to forbid Hermione from ever loading me up with alcohol again." To Neville's horror, Tom sat right next to him. The house elf popped back in and passed vials of the sober up potion around.

"Neville?"

"Right then." Neville cleared his throat and leaned away from Tom in what he thought was a very subtle and not noticeable move, but Tom noticed and he mentally chuckled. "Dumbledore arrived, later than usual, according to the times you two have mentioned," he said gesturing to Fred and George. "He waited for a good hour. I didn't think anyone was coming to meet him, and he seemed
to think the same as he stood and prepared to leave. Just as he reached the door, a tall figure in a heavy black cloak came in… you guys were right. This person was very, very tall."

"Yes, all right! We've already established that Dumbledore was meeting someone very tall. Get on with it Longbottom."

"Look, Malfoy, I'm only repeating it because I think that it is an important detail. This person is taller than a normal human could be, do you get me?" Neville snapped, surprising everyone. "Now shut up and let me finish!"

Draco was shocked to say the least. Where had Longbottom’s backbone come from? "Fine, proceed."

"They sat down, and like the twins said, you couldn't hear a word they were saying, but at the end of their meeting, Dumbledore handed something over to the guy. I'm sorry, I tried to see what it was, but I suspect he had a concealment spell on the item and I caught nothing but a blurry image. The hand that came from beneath the cloak was pale and had long fingernails. Not only that, but there was an insignia ring on one of his fingers. I think it was male because of the size of his hand. I didn't know what to make of the ring because the design on it was something I had never seen before…. That is until I arrived at the club."

"What? You saw the design at the club?" Fred asked.

"Not the exact design, but something very similar. It's for certain the designs originate from the same place."

"Well by all means please enlighten us," Tom softly said.

"The ring’s design was similar to the green marks on your wings, Harry."

Harry lay on the bed under the covers, and watched Draco pacing back and forth, scowling and occasionally muttering curses. It had been like this ever since Neville had told them what he'd seen. When Neville had mentioned the ring had a similar design as the marks on his wings, Falde had instantly appeared at the table and demanded Neville describe the ring in detail. Draco had had a better idea and had called for his Pensieve and they were all able to see what it looked like.

"A *Ukatae!* Dumbledore is conspiring with another *Ukatae!*" Draco seethed for the hundredth time.

Harry rolled his eyes and fell back onto the bed. After they had come out of the Pensieve, Falde had erected a very solid mask over his features, but Harry could sense his distress, and Ozemir’s, over seeing that ring and he refused to tell them what it or the appearance of another *Ukatae* meant to them. Instead he called a meeting with the rest of the guard to be taken in the forest, and neither Harry nor Draco had heard from them since. He sighed. They probably wouldn't have anything explained unless it was demanded, which Harry would. He would also demand to know what was up with the markings on his wings as well. If the design on the ring meant something, then it was probably accurate to assume the markings on his wings did as well.

"Bloody Dumbledore! Bloody *Ukatae*!"

"Draco, you're not acting very Malfoy-like."

Harry sank further into the mattress and groaned as his body began to relax, his muscles and bones screaming at him. Draco had done a number on him and Harry had used muscles he didn't even know he possessed. He grinned and blushed once more thinking about it. Harry enjoyed every
moment of it and really hoped he would have to distract Draco frequently. "You need to calm down now. Whatever Dumbledore has planned will fall through and come back to stab him in the back. Now come here. I'm cold and I want to sleep."

Draco nodded and crawled into bed. He immediately pulled Harry against his warm broad chest before letting his head fall down next to his mates. Draco was surprised that Harry's wings felt comfortable against his chest, instead of awkward like he thought they would be. But the wings seemed to fix themselves and mould against him perfectly.

"What about the prisoners?" Draco asked after a moment of silence. "You never did visit them."

"They'll keep till I'm in the mood. There's no need to rush."

Draco nuzzled Harry's neck. "Lover?"

"Hmm?"

"If Dumbledore has a Ukatae working for him, that means the coming term will be twice as dangerous."

"It's worse than that. I suspect Dumbledore is the one being used. No Ukatae would allow a human to use them. But don't worry, I have faith in our guards, and we're not exactly helpless, are we?"

"And what about the others? Longbottom, Thomas, Ginny, Blaise, Pansy, Lovegood, Hermione… this list goes on. How are we going to keep them safe as well?"

"Awe, it's so cute that you care."

"Hermione mentioned continuing on with the DA meetings, we would of course change the name, and the meetings purposes would be widely diversified. We could teach many things including the Dark Arts, in shades of gray of course, so as not to scare away the students who are… uncertain about such things."

"Defense could be taught, as well as offensive spells, strategy and tactics, and the importance of a united front. By the time we're done with the students, they'll be quite capable of taking care of themselves. Dumbledore will no longer have his army. The army will be ours and by the time our seventh year has come to an end, the school will be ours for the taking as well as the Wizarding World. Let Dumbledore think he has a chance. And as for that Ukatae he speaks with… he will die for trying to interfere."

Draco was nodding along with Harry as he spoke, his grin getting broader with every word. "Do you know how much it turns me on to hear Gryffindor's Golden Boy talking about supreme anarchy?"

"It's my pleasure."

"So much has changed over the summer. It's almost unbelievable."

"Yes. And just think. After everything we've accomplished this summer, think about what we can do during the time we have at school. That reminds me. I wanted to talk to you about something important."

Harry sat up and looked at his hands. Draco sat up as well and curled an arm around Harry's back, over his beautiful wings.
"What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong. I just had an idea I wanted to run by you. It's something I really want to do, but I'm not sure how you or the others will react."

"What is it? Don't let that Gryffindor courage slip away now."

"I want to make Tom and Hermione our blood siblings."

"You are such a Hufflepuff!" Draco cried immediately and in a way that had Harry's shoulders sagging in defeat. But Draco wasn't finished. "I'll do it. The idea appeals to me. We'll do it the day we leave for Hogwarts, if they agree. That will give us time to research the Ritual."

Harry straightened and grinned before throwing himself upon his mate, who began laughing at the happy antics of his mate. Yes, they were definitely in for more changes. But as long as they were together, Draco was certain they could and would handle anything.

A/N: Edited 10/20/2011 and added 2012

So ends the first arc of the Life Cycle. The story continues in the second installment, titled Life Agendas, which can be found on my profile. Hope you enjoyed reading this as much as I enjoyed writing it! Have a great day! :D

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